

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number _____ Page _____

SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD

NRIS Reference Number: 90001079 Date Listed: 7/27/90

<u>Ashcroft--Merrill Historic District</u>	McKinley	NM
Property Name	County	State

Multiple Name

This property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with the attached nomination documentation subject to the following exceptions, exclusions, or amendments, notwithstanding the National Park Service certification included in the nomination documentation.

Beth Boland
Signature of the Keeper

8/24/90
Date of Action

=====

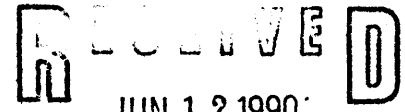
Amended Items in Nomination:

Item #8, Significance: Criteria Consideration A applies because the district is significant in part in the area of religion.

DISTRIBUTION:

- National Register property file
- Nominating Authority (without nomination attachment)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service



National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

NATIONAL REGISTER

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Ashcroft-Merrill Historic District
other names/site number Josiah Emer Ashcroft House; Merrill's Boarding House; Shady Haven

2. Location

street & number Southeast corner Bloomfield and McNeil Streets N/A not for publication
city, town Ramah N/A vicinity
state New Mexico code NM county McKinley code 031 zip code 87321

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> district	<u>3</u>	<u>2</u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<u>1</u>	_____ sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<u>2</u>	_____ structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>6</u>	<u>2</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing:
N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

Thomas W. Hill SHPO 6-6-90
Signature of certifying official Date
Historic Preservation Division Office of Cultural Affairs
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register.
 See continuation sheet. Beth Boland 7/27/90

determined eligible for the National Register. See continuation sheet. _____

determined not eligible for the National Register. _____

removed from the National Register. _____

other, (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Domestic/single dwelling

Domestic/hotel

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Domestic/single dwelling

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(enter categories from instructions)

Other: Vernacular

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Sandstone

walls Sandstone; stucco

roof Asphalt

other _____

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

SUMMARY

The Ashcroft-Merrill Historic District consists of the Ashcroft-Merrill House, four small related outbuildings, two structures (a root cellar and a well), and one site (a carbide gas generator pit). Six of these resources are contributing and two are noncontributing. They are contained on a rectangular, corner lot of about one acre within the town of Ramah. The contributing resources are the Ashcroft-Merrill House and two small outbuildings from the Merrill period as well as the root cellar, well, and carbide gas generator pit. Noncontributing are two buildings constructed after the Period of Significance. The grounds include stone walkways, flower beds, a vegetable garden, a small orchard, and many mature trees. The contributing resources have not been significantly altered and they, with the surrounding grounds, well represent the architectural and historical importance of this property.

CONTRIBUTING RESOURCES

The Ashcroft-Merrill House (Photos 1, 2, 3, 4, 11)

The Ashcroft-Merrill House is a two-story, stone vernacular building with an irregular floor plan. The walls of the main section of the house are sixteen to twenty inches thick and are constructed of sandstone with limestone mortar. The main section has a cross-gable roof with a window in each of four gables. On the south and east sides of the building a one-story, stuccoed, L-shaped kitchen, a one-story bathroom, and a porch are covered by a shed roof and a shed-roof extension of the main roof. The entire roof is covered with asphalt shingles.

The windows are wood, 2/2, 4/4, or 6/6, double-hung and have stone sills and lintels. Some old panes remain. There is a bay window on the south facade (photo 4). The two doors on the main (west) facade are wooden with glass panes in the upper half and glass transoms to which etched glass has been added by the present owner. There are three original brick and stone chimneys of which two are in use.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 7 Page 1

The interior of the house contains a living room, dining room, hobby room, bedroom, kitchen, and bathroom on the first floor. Upstairs there are two bedrooms, one at least twice as large as the other, and a storage room. A spiral staircase leads from the living room to the larger bedroom on the second floor. All of the windows in the original stone house are deeply inset. Those in the living room, hobby room, and large bedroom upstairs, have exposed heavy timber lintels.

On the first floor the south wall of the living room is of exposed stone; the other walls have been replastered. There is original plaster in the downstairs bedroom, hobby room, and dining room. On the second floor the large upstairs bedroom has an exposed stone wall to a height of about three feet with paneling above. Other walls are covered with original or new plaster. Though most of the ceilings are of wood, some are plastered. Evidence of the original, carbide lighting has been left in some of the ceilings (photo 11).

On the ground level, floors are made of oak in the living and hobby rooms, and pine boards in the bedroom. Upstairs the floors consist of four and six inch boards, although some are carpeted. In the kitchen there are original built-in features from the period of significance such as pie safes on the south wall and built-in cupboards on the west wall. One of the latter has a flour sifter, flour bin, sugar bin, and so on, and another for china has diamond leaded glass doors.

All major additions to the house were made during the period of significance. The original owner, Josiah Ashcroft, added the one-story kitchen. The bathroom was added by the Merrills after 1917. The Merrills also added a porch which wrapped around the east (rear) and north sides of the house.

Since the period of significance, the house has undergone some alteration and a major renovation. During the time that Charles and Kristen Mallery owned the property (1971-1976), most of the porch that the Merrills had built around the back and side of the house was removed, a fireplace was built in the dining room, and the staircase was removed from the bedroom. A new staircase to the second floor was partially completed in the living room. The present owners completed this staircase. They also added the partition between the living room and the hobby room which had originally been one large room that was partitioned by the Merrills in a different place. The Merrill partition had been removed before the present ownership.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 2

The house had suffered periods of neglect and the present owners found it necessary to replace or restore deteriorated elements. The downstairs bedroom ceiling had collapsed and was replaced with a wooden ceiling compatible with those in the rest of the house. The staircase started in the living room, but abandoned a few feet short of the second floor, was finished using wood from a cabin on the grounds which had deteriorated beyond restoration. After numerous repairs, the hand-hewn wood shake roof was completely replaced in 1989. Asphalt shingles in a brown shade were used.

Today the house is in excellent condition and has been restored by the present owners with serious attention to historic detail.

Root Cellar (Photo 6, Root Cellar entrance)

The root cellar was dug by the Merrills in about 1920, according to the Merrills' son, Robert, (interview with Sze). It has walls of native rock and deep shelves constructed of rough-sawn boards on north, east, and south walls. The floor was cemented by the Merrills with the residue from the carbide gas pit. The ceiling is made of rough-sawn planks. The entrance to the root cellar extends from the west wall of the adobe wash house which was built above it. The outside walls of the entrance are wood frame covered with embossed tin and the roof is covered with tin sheets. The door on the west side is made of vertical rough-sawn boards. Wooden stairs of rough-sawn boards lead down into the cellar.

Wash House/Laundry (Photo 6)

This small building constructed of exposed adobe was built over the root cellar by the Merrills in about 1920, according to the Merrills' son, Robert, (interview with Sze). It has a rock foundation and a low-pitched gable roof which is covered with hand-split shake shingles. The adobe walls on the interior are unfinished. The main facade has only a door made of rough-sawn vertical boards. There are windows on the north and east facades. The Wash House is currently used for storage. The entrance to the root cellar extends from its west facade.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 7 Page 3

Shower House/Woodshed (Photo 5)

This small cinder block building was built about 1930 for the use of guests at the Merrills' boarding house, according to the Merrills son, Robert, (interview with Sze). The walls have been painted tan. The roof which has a 2" slope from the center is covered with rolled asphalt. There are two doors on the main facade and the building was partitioned down the middle with wash bowls, toilets, and showers on each side. The showers are in a corner with a curved curbing to keep in water. One wash bowl remains. Today one side of the building is used for recreational storage and the other for storage of tools and gardening supplies. A woodshed constructed of horizontal rough planking was attached to the rear of the building.

Well (Photo 9)

The hand-dug well lies northeast of the house. It is lined with rock and is today about ten feet deep. The above ground structure has recently been reconstructed following historic photographs from the Merrill period.

Carbide Gas Generator Tank. (Photo 10)

This site lies about twelve feet from the southeast corner of the main house. It consists of a metal-lined pit about eight feet deep and three feet in diameter which has been filled in for safety. The top of the metal lining and the pipe which led to the house connection are visible.

NONCONTRIBUTING RESOURCES

Guest Cottage (Photo 8)

This small, one-story, two-room cottage was brought by the Merrills about 1950 from a local sawmill where it was built, according to the Merrills' son, Robert. Most similar examples in Ramah have been torn down or remodeled (Merrill interview with Sze). The cottage, which faces south onto McNeil Street, was used to accommodate guests. The walls are tan stucco and the roof which is covered with rolled asphalt has a 12" bow and bracketed overhangs. On both the north and south facades there is a door with four panes of glass in the upper portion. There are horizontally sliding, wooden windows on all four facades. Today the building is used as an arts and crafts workshop and a

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 4

gift shop where local artisans sell their work. A second guest cottage was built on the property by the Merrills at about the same time that this one was brought from the sawmill. Having deteriorated beyond restoration, the second cottage was torn down by the present owners.

Garage (Photo 7)

Built in 1986, the double garage is wood framed with T4-11 siding painted tan to blend with the sandstone of the house. It has a gable roof covered with asphalt shingles and a concrete slab floor. There are two single-car doors on the main facade.

LANDSCAPING

The grounds contain both historic landscaping and landscaping which reflects the history of the property. Along the west property line on Bloomfield Street (formerly Main Street) there is a line of ten mature Lombardy poplar trees which probably predate the house. Other old trees of notable size include: three Lombardy poplars irregularly placed behind the row along the west street line and two Lombardy poplars along the east property line; three huge silver maple trees clustered near the northwest corner of the house; and a large elm tree near the adobe wash house southeast of the house. There is also an old orchard on the northeast corner of the property containing seven large mature apple trees and other younger apple trees. In addition to perennial and vegetable gardens there are lilac bushes, clumps of roses, and other plantings scattered on the grounds. Flagstone walkways lead to the two doors on the main facade of the house from a gate on Bloomfield street.

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) A B C D E F G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Religion

Architecture

Commerce

Period of Significance

c.1897-1940

Significant Dates

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

Ashcroft, Josiah Emer

Architect/Builder

Unknown/Waite, John William, stone mason

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

SUMMARY

The Ashcroft-Merrill Historic District is significant as a prominent Mormon-built home with outbuildings in Ramah. Among the earliest Mormon colonies in New Mexico, Ramah is one of a small number of original missionary settlements in New Mexico and Arizona to survive. It provides a view of Mormon life first in a missionary colony and later in a remote rural village. The property includes the home of Josiah Emer Ashcroft, an early settler and leading citizen of Ramah whose life exemplifies Mormonism. Ashcroft served in many positions of responsibility rising to the post of bishop (1908-1914), then the highest civic and religious authority in the ward which included Ramah. During the Merrill ownership, in addition to being a family home, the property was enlarged to serve as a boarding house/hotel. It was one of a very few such establishments in the area and an important business in the community. Architecturally, the main house is an example of a Mormon-built, two-story, stone vernacular dwelling and is the only two-story home remaining in the area that still has its original sandstone walls exposed. Much of the landscaping of the grounds reflects the age of the property and its historical uses. The period of significance (c.1897-1940) extends from the approximate building date of the main house to the National Register's fifty-year limit.

THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS (Based primarily on O'Dea)

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, whose members are also called Mormons, was founded by Joseph Smith in upstate New York on April 6, 1830. Smith had received a revelation engraved on gold plates which gave the history of the ancient inhabitants of the Western World. Smith's translation of the record was published as the Book of Mormon in 1830. In part it traces the origin of the American Indian to Laman, a grandson of the Biblical Joseph, who was led by God in a ship to a land of promise across the sea. Hence Mormons call his descendants, America's native peoples, Lamanites. The Book

See continuation sheet

9. Major Bibliographical References

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 # _____

See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property 1.068 acres

UTM References

A

1	2	7	2	8	2	6	0	3	8	9	0	8	0	0
Zone			Easting					Northing						

B

Zone			Easting					Northing						

C

Zone			Easting					Northing						

D

Zone			Easting					Northing						

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

Lot 2, Block 2, Ramah Townsite. McKinley County, New Mexico

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

Legal description of the historic boundary of the property which includes the house, associated outbuildings, and surrounding grounds.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Corinne P. Sze
organization Research Services of Santa Fe date February 15, 1990
street & number 1042 Stagecoach Road telephone (505) 983-5605
city or town Santa Fe state NM zip code 87501

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 1

of Mormon also describes Christ's visit to the people on the American continent after the resurrection and his establishment of his church among them.

Membership increased rapidly in the new sect. The headquarters was moved to Kirkland, Ohio and settlements established in Jackson County, Missouri, where it had been revealed that the City of Zion would eventually be built. From the beginning the followers of Joseph Smith encountered fierce antagonism from non-Mormons whom they termed "gentiles". In 1838 they were driven from Missouri and reestablished themselves in Illinois where they built the town of Nauvoo. By this time their membership had grown to 12,000 adherents.

After years of continued hostilities including the murder of Joseph Smith, the Latter-day Saints were led by Brigham Young on a western exodus which finally ended in the Salt Lake Valley in 1847 where they founded Salt Lake City. Here the Mormons were able to turn the solid unity of purpose, forged in the struggles in the East with a hostile gentile world, toward the new adversary - an inhospitable environment. Their highly organized communal system helped them to overcome the hardships of a semiarid region. From Salt Lake City, Young sent out colonists to found settlements in many parts of the Rocky Mountain West, including New Mexico and Arizona. Eventually colonists would settle as far north and south as Canada and Mexico where they could freely practice polygamy. Most of the colonists in Mexico were driven out during the Mexican Revolution.

It was during the Nauvoo period that Joseph Smith received a revelation on "celestial marriage," including plural marriage, which encouraged, under proper conditions, the marrying by a man of more than one woman at the same time. Polygamous marriage abetted the doctrinal mandate to have many offspring in order to provide enough bodies for the numerous souls awaiting incarnation. The glory a Latter-day Saint could expect in the afterlife corresponded to the number of his wives and children. Polygamy particularly aroused the antipathy of other Americans. In 1862 and 1880 Congress passed anti-polygamy bills. Ten years after the second legislation, the president of the Church of Latter-day Saints issued a manifesto urging all members to comply with the laws of the land on marriage. This opened the way for Utah statehood.

The Mormons established a highly complicated hierarchy headed by a president possessing supreme authority. The jurisdictions of the church were divided into stakes which in turn were divided into wards. The spiritual head

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 2

of the colony and leader in all community affairs was the bishop of the ward who was appointed by church authorities but sustained by the common consent of the ward members.

MORMON COLONIZATION, TOWN PLANNING, AND ARCHITECTURE

Mormon colonization was the product of religious, cultural, and practical imperatives. Fundamental to the Mormon creed was the goal of establishing the Kingdom of God on earth and spreading the religion especially among the Lamanites who were in need of reconversion. Both objects were to be achieved through colonization of new lands.

In the broadest context, the Mormon commitment to colonization can be seen as an expression of "Manifest Destiny," the belief, widely held in the 1840s and 1850s, in the rightness and inevitability of American territorial expansion across the continent. Joseph Smith had broadened his original vision of Mormon destiny from the idea of a gathering place of Zion at a specific location in Missouri to the establishment of the Kingdom of God over the entire western hemisphere. Brigham Young sought to make this vision reality.

In addition, there were practical reasons for the expansionist impulses of the Mormons stemming primarily from the economic pressures of large families and the hostility toward polygamy which they experienced as non-Mormons moved into Utah.

Mormon colonizing was a centrally directed, group effort that was looked upon as a religious duty and called a "mission". Isolated homesteading was unknown among the Latter-day Saints. New towns were founded by colonizing parties which were carefully selected to include people with the range of skills required to establish a new community.

Mormon town planning followed a distinctive and identifiable pattern, some aspects of which were laid down by Joseph Smith in the 1830's with his plan for the City of Zion. The influence of the plan (which was never strictly followed) as well as the exigencies of sustaining life in the Southwest are seen in characteristics which to this day give Mormon communities a common visual identity. Streets were laid out in an overly wide grid pattern of uniformly extra-wide streets aligned as closely as possible with the points of the compass. These outsize blocks were in turn divided into large lots usually consisting of at least an acre of land. The grid which formed the nucleus of the community was surrounded by open agricultural lands. In a

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 3

typical colony, lots in town would be distributed by a drawing. Each family would also get a portion of the surrounding open land. This plan afforded the mutual protection of a relatively close community and at the same time provided each family with a sufficiently large portion of land upon which to strive for the goal of self sufficiency which was central to Mormon life.

Despite a total lack of previous experience with irrigation, the Latter-day Saints pioneered a system of reclamation by irrigation districts and were the first Anglo-American group to establish large-scale settlements based on irrigated farming. Wide roadside irrigation ditches became a characteristic feature of Mormon communities. By 1860 the improved farm land of the Mormons was valued at more than one and a third million dollars.

It has been noted that one of the first things the Mormons did in establishing a new settlement was to plant fruit and shade trees. The Lombardy poplar, introduced in Utah in the 1860's, became such a characteristic feature of Mormon settlements as to be considered a "Mormon tree". This quick growing tree provided an effective wind break and was commonly used to mark property lines (Francaviglia, 89-90). Small orchards and vegetable gardens were common features of the large town lots providing families with a source of food. Flower gardens were cultivated as a source of pride.

The architectural evolution of Mormon towns followed a typical pattern. In the first phase, temporary shelters were built to be replaced as quickly as possible by simple buildings of whatever materials were most readily available, most commonly adobe or logs. In the second phase, as the community gained stability, more solid buildings were sought which not only reflected material success, but also perhaps satisfied a desire for permanency born of the very real lack of security which had driven the Mormons to the West. Before brick and lumber became available, stone was the material of choice especially if it could be quarried nearby. The most common plans of Mormon dwellings were the I-house, a one-room-deep, two-story, rectangular plan, and the two-room deep, center-hall plan (Goss, 208-216). Around the turn of the century prosperous families in the outlying communities could aspire to Victorian elements such as asymmetrical floor plans and bay windows, although high style buildings were generally restricted to larger communities closer to the centers of Mormon life in Utah.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 4

HISTORY OF RAMAH, NEW MEXICO (Based primarily on Peterson, Telling,
Divett, and interview with Tietjen)

In the 1870s the urgency felt by the Mormons to expand their territory was intensified by growing antagonism over polygamy from non-Mormons in Utah. At the same time the Navajo Indians were subdued permitting colonization into Arizona, western New Mexico, and eventually Mexico. This southward expansion came to be regarded as a divine imperative. It has been pointed out that the Mormons expanded along the line of least resistance. Rather than compete with other settlers for the most desirable areas, they sought to escape conflict and persecution by occupying difficult and unwanted places. (Peterson 8)

The lower valley of the Little Colorado River in northeastern Arizona recommended itself by its lack of rain, high winds, and poor soil, as well as by the proximity of several groups of Indians suitable for conversion. Unsuccessful attempts at settlement had already been made by both gentiles and Mormons before four Mormon villages were established there in 1876. An offshoot of this first phase of settlement on the Little Colorado was the establishment of a missionary colony at Savoia in northwest New Mexico.

Savoia, the first Mormon settlement in New Mexico and the predecessor of Ramah, did not prosper. Having suffered disease and Indian hostilities, most of the remaining missionaries had been recalled by the time settlers from Sunset on the Little Colorado established a new missionary colony a few miles south of Savoia. Among these colonists was James B. Ashcroft, the older brother of Josiah Emer Ashcroft. The new community was first called Navajo. However, when the colonists applied for a post office, another name had to be chosen because there was already a town called Navajo in New Mexico. "Ramah" was taken from the Book of Mormon. In 1883 Brigham Young, Jr. organized Ramah as a ward of the St. Joseph stake in Arizona with Ernest Tietjen as its first bishop.

Upon their arrival the colonists took up work on the reservoir dam begun by the Savoia colony, laid out a townsite and irrigation ditches, and planted crops. They also continued missionary work among the "Lamanites," that is, the nearby Navajo and Zuni Indians. The community grew despite the hardships created by frequent periods of drought and ensuing crop failures. Daily life was always difficult. In years when crops did poorly the population was barely able to survive. In the best years they could supply most of their own food from farm animals, gardens, and orchards. Root cellars were built to store vegetables for later use. Large families and plural marriages were an important economic asset providing the needed human resources in a subsistence economy based on hand labor.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 5

Most of the earliest dwellings in Ramah were built of logs and mud. However, once the community was established, several stone structures were built. The sandstone and lime mortar were of the same origin as that used to build the Ramah dam. In 1886 the church authorities visited the village and asked that the streets be straightened and aligned with the cardinal directions. Beautification was also urged. Lombardy poplars, the "Mormon tree", were brought to Ramah (Tietjen, 32). According to town lore, the future Ashcroft property was chosen to be the town square and a row of poplars was planted across the west line. The town square was later moved south but the trees remain.

In 1889 the settlers were faced with another threat to the existence of their colony. The townsite, for which they had never secured legal title, lay within the Atlantic and Pacific land grant. After the railroad sold the land to a neighboring cattle company, an eviction notice was served upon the Mormons which they ignored. After receiving a second notice the Bishop appealed to Salt Lake City. Money to purchase the land was provided by the Church authorities who established the Ramah Land and Irrigation Company and agreed to accept an equivalent amount of work on the dam as repayment.

In 1899 after several disasters in the previous decade, including sickness, the collapse of the dam, and drought, the church authorities decided that it was not right to require such hardships and released all who were called as missionaries to go elsewhere if they so desired. The new paramount goal of the community became building a permanent Mormon settlement and making "the desert bloom like a rose."

Despite hardships the community survived, one of a small number to do so in Arizona and New Mexico. Today the Latter-day Saints are still predominant in Ramah, an agricultural community of about 1300 people. The reservoir, now called Ramah Lake, is leased to the state of New Mexico.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 6

HISTORY OF THE ASHCROFT-MERRILL HISTORIC DISTRICT

The Ashcroft Period (c.1897-1917)

Josiah Emer Ashcroft

Josiah Emer Ashcroft was born in 1865 in Hyde Park, Utah. As a child he went with his family to Joseph City and then to Sunset, both of which were Mormon colonies on the little Colorado River in Arizona. With the breakup of Sunset, the family was sent to form the new colony of Navajo, as Ramah was first called. In 1884, after a period spent in Mexico with his mother and step-father, John Bloomfield, Josiah returned to Ramah so that he could marry his first wife, Mary Lafentie Pipkin Hatch. The young Ashcrofts first lived in the old Bloomfield house, Josiah's step-father's home. Josiah and Lafentie Ashcroft eventually had ten children, at least three of whom were born before they built the stone house. Lafentie died following the birth of twins in 1909. In 1899 Ashcroft married a second wife, Agnes Neilson Ashcroft who was then established in a nearby house. After she died in childbirth in 1907, her several children moved into the stone house to be taken care of by Lafentie. In 1910 Ashcroft married his third wife, Arrilla Hamblin.

Josiah Emer Ashcroft contributed greatly to the Ramah colony as a civic, religious, and business leader. He helped to build the reservoir which was essential to the success of the community. In addition to being a farmer, he owned a sawmill with his brother and a trading post.

Ashcroft served in many positions of responsibility in the community before becoming a bishop. Early church records show that he was chosen and sustained to act on a committee to purchase and divide land among the settlers. He served as second counselor to Bishop James B. McNeil and later as ward clerk. He was appointed to make rules for the town cow herd and was called upon to take a leading part in the erection of a new school and church building in 1896-1897. In 1898 he was sustained as high counselor.

In 1902 at his own request Ashcroft was released as Sunday school superintendent to go on a mission to the western states including Nebraska and Colorado. He finished his mission in 1907 and soon after was called to be the Bishop of Ramah and was ordained high priest on August 22, 1908. Ashcroft served as bishop of the ward until his resignation in 1914. As bishop he was both the civic and religious leader of the ward which included Ramah and its environs. He is credited with uniting the people after a period of dissension over authority in the ward.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 7

Lafentie Ashcroft was also active in the community serving as president of the Young Ladies Mutual Improvement Association. She taught the village children in her home to play the violin and piano and to sing folk songs for which she did not accept payment feeling it a worthy recompense to teach for the betterment of the colony.

In 1917, after several years in which the crops failed in the Ramah area and Ashcroft's own health declined, he decided to sell his home and return to Utah to be closer to his third wife's family. He died in Salt Lake City 1924. His third son, Paris, said of him, "Thus ends the life of a great man. He lived great and he died great. No man in all my memory lived a finer and sweeter life. In all Mormondom, it would be hard to find a nobler soul."

The Ashcroft House

The exact dates when Josiah Emer Ashcroft bought this property and built his home are not known. The earliest deed showing his ownership is dated December 30, 1904 and records the sale of Lot 2, Block 2 by the Ramah Land and Irrigation Company to J.E. Ashcroft. However, it is possible that this is merely an official recognition from the townsite company of his ownership of land that he already possessed. Journals kept by Ashcroft's children and testimony of descendants and long-time residents of Ramah provide a range of dates for the building of the house from 1891 to 1905.¹ Given the uncertainty about the Mormons' ownership of the townsite itself in the early 1890s, it is unlikely that Ashcroft would have a recorded deed to the property if he took possession before this controversy was settled. Even after the ownership question was resolved, Ashcroft may not have filed a deed with the civil authorities since his church's authority in this matter would have been paramount for him.

1. Blanche Clawson Lewis, a long-time resident of Ramah, claims in a statement signed October 8, 1986 that the Ashcrofts had three sons when they moved into the new rock house. This would place the date between 1891 and 1894. Glenna Purdie states that her mother, Ida (Ashcroft's fourth child, born 1894), wrote in her history that the first five children were born elsewhere. This would place the date between 1897 and 1901. Paris Ashcroft, the third child, is quoted as stating in his journal that the house was built during the great drought of 1897 to 1905 (Reno to Morehouse). According to the present owner, other Ashcroft descendants have disputed the later dates.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 8

The house was built for Ashcroft by John William Waite, a stone mason and a relative of the Ashcrofts, according to Waite's descendants. It was constructed of sandstone with a lime mortar, the same materials used to build the reservoir dam which is located three quarters of a mile from the house. The sandstone was hauled from a site about one mile north of the house. The mortar was made by melting limestone in huge kilns about ten miles from Ramah. Evidence of these kilns remains today. Huge timbers were placed at stress points on the top part of the walls and at roof joins. Local labor was used in the building of the house. According to local tradition the corner stones were laid by Zuni Indians and illustrate the Zunis' precise art of laying rock, in comparison with the walls further up. Not long after the house was completed, the one-story, L-shaped kitchen was added to the south and east sides by the original owner.

When the Ashcrofts owned the home, the large downstairs living room, which included the section which has recently been partitioned off for a hobby room, was known as the Great Room and was only open on Sundays. The present downstairs bedroom was used as the family's main living and study room. The present dining room was Lafentie and Emer's bedroom. Up to twelve children slept in the large bedroom upstairs and the rest in the smaller bedroom.

The Great Room was used for church meetings and for consultations with Indians and others. During his missions to the Indians, Ashcroft had learned their languages fluently and was frequently called upon to counsel them. Indians were often at the Ashcrofts' dining table. Many parties were held in the home for the young people of the church. During the great typhoid epidemic of 1908, Josiah and Lafentie turned the Great Room into a hospital and cared for the sick.

The Merrill Period (1917-1940)

Thomas and Mary James Merrill bought the Ashcroft homestead in 1917 for four wagons with teams and a \$600 note. The Merrills had been among the Mormon colonists in Mexico who were forced to leave by Pancho Villa. They came to Ramah, perhaps because Mrs. Merrill's mother was the sister of Josiah Ashcroft's step-father, John Bloomfield. The Merrills had ten children, seven born in Mexico and three in Ramah.

The Merrills converted the property into a boarding house/hotel and made several alterations to the house in the process. They partitioned the Great Room into two rooms for guests and added a bathroom on the east side (rear) of

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 9

the original stone structure. They also added a porch around the east and north sides of the house. Soon after purchasing the property they dug a root cellar for storing vegetables.

Several outbuildings were built to accommodate the needs of boarders, including an adobe wash house/laundry, constructed over the root cellar and a divided shower house. After the Period of Significance, two guest cottages (with no plumbing) were added to the property. About 1930, a carbide gas generator was installed after a traveling salesman came through and talked Mrs. Merrill into it, according to her son. This system consisted of a eight-foot deep, metal-lined pit with water at the bottom. A bucket of carbide was lowered into the water to produce a gas which was then piped into the house to burn for lighting and to fuel a stove. This was the only home in Ramah to have such a system. Electricity did not come in until 1948.

The boarding house prospered as the only place in the area for many years available for travelers and temporary visitors such as single school teachers, county agents, telephone workers, and anthropologists studying the nearby Indians. Among those who stayed there was the pre-eminent anthropologist and Harvard professor, Clyde Kluckhohn, well-known for his studies of the Navajo. Mrs. Merrill was an excellent cook and the establishment was famous for its hearty meals which are still remembered today.

History of the Property after the Period of Significance (1941-present)

Although the Period of Significance ends arbitrarily at the Register's fifty-year limit, the Merrills operated the boarding house until the mid-1950s. Thomas Merrill died in 1960 and his wife in 1966. The house was vacant and neglected for a number of years before the Merrill heirs sold it to Charles and Kristen Mallery in 1971.

The Mallerys tore down most of the long, screened back porch. They cemented the area which had been the dirt floor of the porch for a patio. They also added the dining room fireplace and removed the original staircase from the bedroom. The replacement they built in the living room was not completed.

In 1976 Joseph Schepps of Santa Fe, New Mexico, purchased the property. Little was done until the present owners bought it in 1983 and commenced a major restoration. The damage to the main house which resulted from long periods of neglect was repaired with much attention to historic accuracy, as described in Section 7. The house has no central heating and continues to be

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 10

heated by wood stoves. The kitchen range from the Merrill era is still in use. The outbuildings were similarly brought back to usable condition with the exception of one of two guest cottages from the Merrill period which had deteriorated beyond saving and was torn down. The historic landscaping has been maintained or recreated. Water from the reservoir is still used in the gardens, though brought by pipes today. As late as 1983 there was an open irrigation ditch along one side of the property.

Today the Ashcroft-Merrill Historic District, which the present owners have named Shady Haven, is in excellent condition and well represents its historic associations.

ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

The house built by Josiah Ashcroft represents a stone vernacular building constructed by the Mormons in a New Mexico missionary colony of the late nineteenth century. The style of the solid stone house, with its irregular plan and simple embellishments such as a bay window, exemplifies the second phase of architecture in Mormon communities at some distance from the centers of Mormon culture. As such it reflects the growing prosperity and stability of Ramah as well as Josiah Ashcroft's high place in it. The house is an American vernacular design, front gable with gabled side wings, which was brought from the East and shows no influence of indigenous New Mexico architecture, as exemplified by the nearby Zuni Pueblo.

Mormon missionaries, as well as Americans sent by the Federal government, are credited with teaching the Zuni to build with large, well-shaped stones. Until after World War II, they used this technique extensively. (Bunting, p. 47) The Ashcroft House is an example of Mormon stone work which was built partially with Zuni labor.

Of the other early stone buildings in Ramah, one one-story dwelling, thought to be more recent than the Ashcroft House, displays its original stone. A two-story house and a two-story trading post and dwelling have been refaced with a more modern stone. Thus the house built by Josiah Ashcroft is the only two-story, stone structure built by the Mormon settlers of Ramah to remain in its original condition.

The outbuildings constructed by the Merrills are not architecturally significant individually, but demonstrate the range of materials available in the area and used into the twentieth century, from the most ancient, adobe, to frame and stucco and cinder block.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8 Page 11

The buildings on this property suffered from neglect in the last decades but have not been significantly altered. On the basis of extensive research particularly among the many living descendants of the Ashcrofts and the Merrills, the present owners have repaired damage and returned the house and outbuildings to their historic condition.

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

The Ashcroft-Merrill Historic District represents a form of settlement and a way of life little studied outside of the Mormon Church as part of the New Mexico experience. At the eastern edge of Mormon colonization in the Rocky Mountain West, Ramah is one of a very few original early Mormon settlements in Arizona and New Mexico to survive and is considered to be the oldest in New Mexico.

The Ashcroft House illustrates the life of early Mormon settlers and, as the home of a leader in a communal religious society, was an important focus for the community. Josiah Emer Ashcroft himself exemplifies Mormon culture, both in his personal and public lives - through his dedication to his religion's behest to procreate, through his missionary work from which he developed a strong personal relationship with the Indians of the Ramah area, and through his total involvement in the religious and civic affairs of the community at every level, including the highest as bishop of the ward.

Much of the landscaping reflects the history of the property and the requirements of Mormon pioneer life. The rows of Lombardy poplar trees were a characteristic means used by the Mormons to mark property lines. Other large fruit and shade trees are reminiscent of Brigham Young's warning that laxity in planting shade and fruit trees, among other improvements, "is the very way to bring the power of the Devil upon us," (quoted by Francaviglia, 86). The vegetable garden and the small orchard with its several very old apple trees illustrate ways Mormons typically used their large town lots as means towards self sufficiency. Bouncing Bet, a favorite of the settlers who used the root as a shampoo and a soap for the washing of clothes, borders the lawn. A grove of old-fashioned pink roses grows on north side of the front lawn.

Under the Merrill ownership the property not only continued to represent Mormon life but also became a business establishment which was important to the community in providing one of the only places in the area for visitors to stay. Thus, throughout the historical period this property was of major historical significance to the small Mormon community of Ramah.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 9 Page 1

Books and Theses

- Bunting, Bainbridge. Early Architecture in New Mexico. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1976.
- Carter, Thomas and Peter Goss. Utah's Historic Architecture, 1847-1940. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1988.
- Foster, Mannie. "History of Mormon Settlements in Mexico and New Mexico." M.A. Thesis, University of New Mexico, 1937.
- Francaviglia, Richard V. The Mormon Landscape. New York: AMS Press, Inc., 1978.
- Neilson, Friehoff Godfrey. Journals, vols. 1,2,3. LDS Church Library, Ramah, New Mexico.
- O'Dea, Thomas F. The Mormons. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1957.
- Palmer, John Franklin. "Mormon Settlements in the San Juan Basin of Colorado and New Mexico." M.A. Thesis, Brigham Young University, 1967.
- Peterson, Charles S. Take Up Your Mission: Mormon Colonizing along the Little Colorado River, 1870-1900. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1973.
- Tietjen, Gary. Mormon Pioneers of New Mexico. Santa Fe, 1980.
- Vogt, Evon Z. and Ethel M. Albert. People of the Rimrock: A study of Values in Five Cultures. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966.

Periodicals

- Divett, Robert Thomas. "New Mexico and the Mormons," Southwest Heritage (Spring 1976): 14-19.
- Goss, Peter L. "The Architectural History of Utah," Utah Historical Quarterly 43 (3): 208-239.
- Jackson, Richard. "The Mormon Village: Genesis and Antecedents of the City of Zion Plan," BYU Studies 17: 223-240.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 9 Page 2

Meinig, D.W. "The Mormon Culture Region: Strategies and Patterns in the Geography of the American West, 1847-1964," Annals of the Association of American Geographers 55 (June 1965): 191-220.

Sandia Lab News July 31, 1987.

Sellers, Charles L. "Early Mormon Community Planning," Journal of the American Institute of Planners, 28 (1962): 24-30.

Telling, Irving. "Ramah, New Mexico 1876-1900: An Historical Episode with Some Value Analysis," Utah Historical Quarterly, 21 (1953): 117-136.

Letters and Statements

Lewis, Blanche Clawson. Statement. October 8, 1986.

Merrill, Patti to Rosemary Harrington. September 13, 1983.

Purdie, Neil and Glenna to R. Harrington. n.d.

Reno (otherwise unidentified) to Glenn and Ira Morehouse. n.d.

Interviews

Robert Merrill, March 16, 1989, with Rosemary Harrington
March 6, 1990, with Corinne Sze.

Rosemary Harrington, January 31, 1990, with Corinne Sze.

Gary Tietjen, February 5, 1990, with Corinne Sze.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number Photos Page 1

Information common to all photographs:

1. Ashcroft-Merrill Historic District
2. Ramah, New Mexico
5. Rosemary Harrington
Box 266
Ramah, New Mexico 87321

Information on individual photographs:

1. Ashcroft-Merrill House
 3. Dane Lambson
 4. May 1989
 6. West (main) facade, camera facing east
 7. Photo #1
-
1. Ashcroft-Merrill House
 3. Dane Lambson
 4. May 1989
 6. North and east facades, camera facing southwest
 7. Photo #2
-
1. Ashcroft-Merrill House
 3. Rosemary Harrington
 4. June 1989
 6. East facade, camera facing west.
 7. Photo #3
-
1. Ashcroft-Merrill House
 3. Dane Lambson
 4. May 1989
 6. South facade, camera facing north
 7. Photo #4
-
1. Shower House/Woodshed
 3. Rosemary Harrington
 4. June 1989
 6. North and west facades, camera facing southeast
 7. Photo #5

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number Photos Page 2

1. Wash House and Root Cellar Entrance
3. Dane Lambson
4. May 1989
6. South facade, camera facing north.
7. Photo #6

1. Garage
3. Rosemary Harrington
4. June 1989
6. West facade, camera facing east.
7. Photo #7

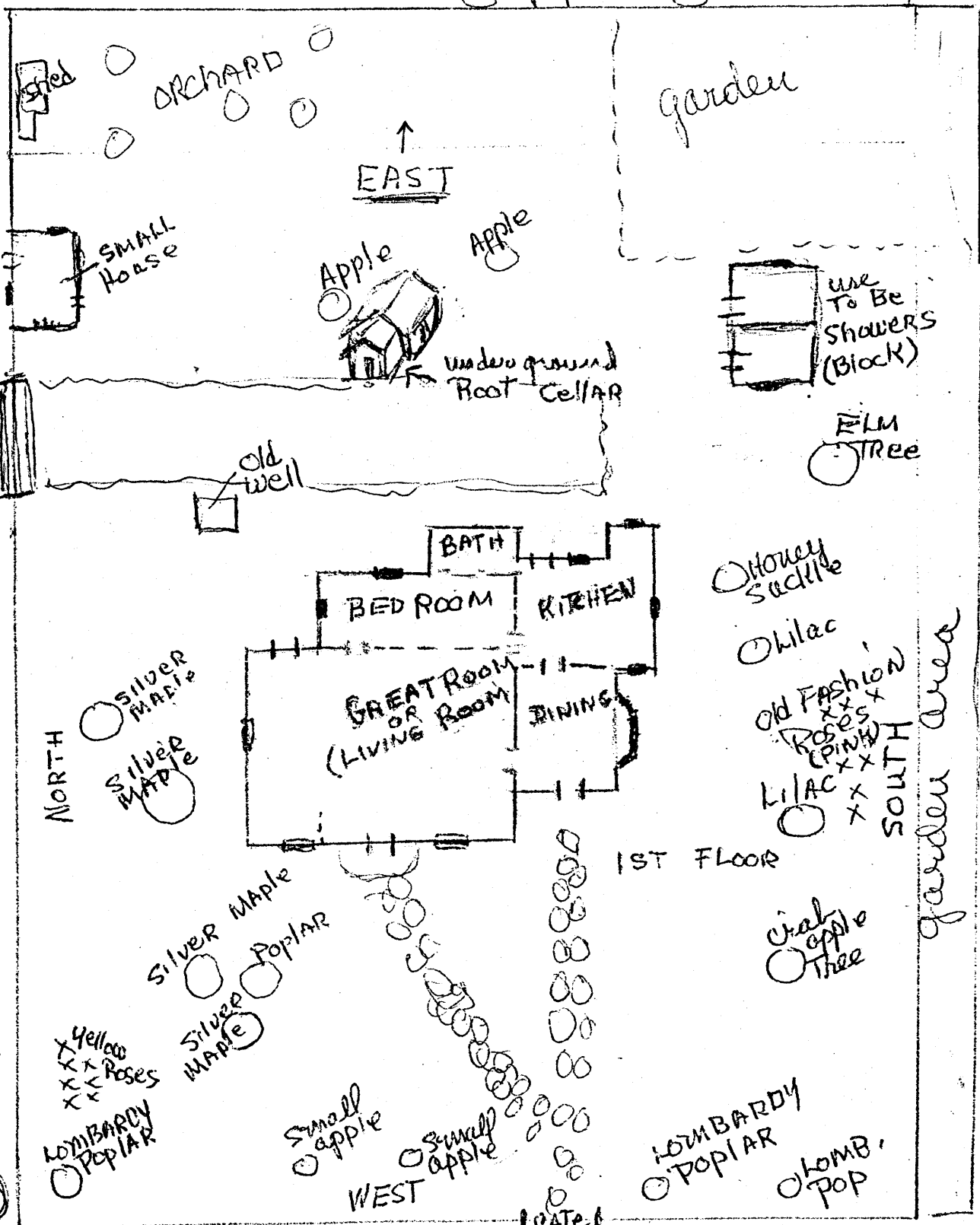
1. Guest Cottage
3. Rosemary Harrington
4. June 1989
6. North facade, camera facing south.
7. Photo #8

1. Well
3. Rosemary Harrington
4. March 1990
6. Reconstructed above-ground structure, camera facing northwest.
7. Photo #9

1. Carbide Gas Generator Pit
3. Rosemary Harrington
4. March 1990
6. Top of filled-in, metal-lined pit and top of pipe which led to house connection.
7. Photo 10

1. Ashcroft-Merrill House
3. Rosemary Harrington
4. March 1989
6. Dining room ceiling connection for carbide gas lighting.
7. Photo #11

#8



Mc Neil ST

NORTH

EAST

SOUTH

WEST

1ST FLOOR

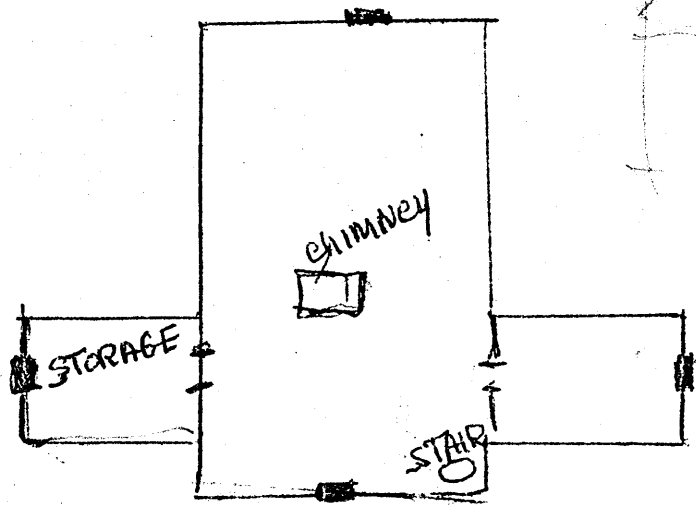
MAP of House
AND
GROUNDS
of
OLD Ashcroft
HOME

BloomField ST

(use To be MAIN ST)
RE-NAMED 12 YRS AGO
FOR PAST BISHOPS
OF L.D.S. CHURCH

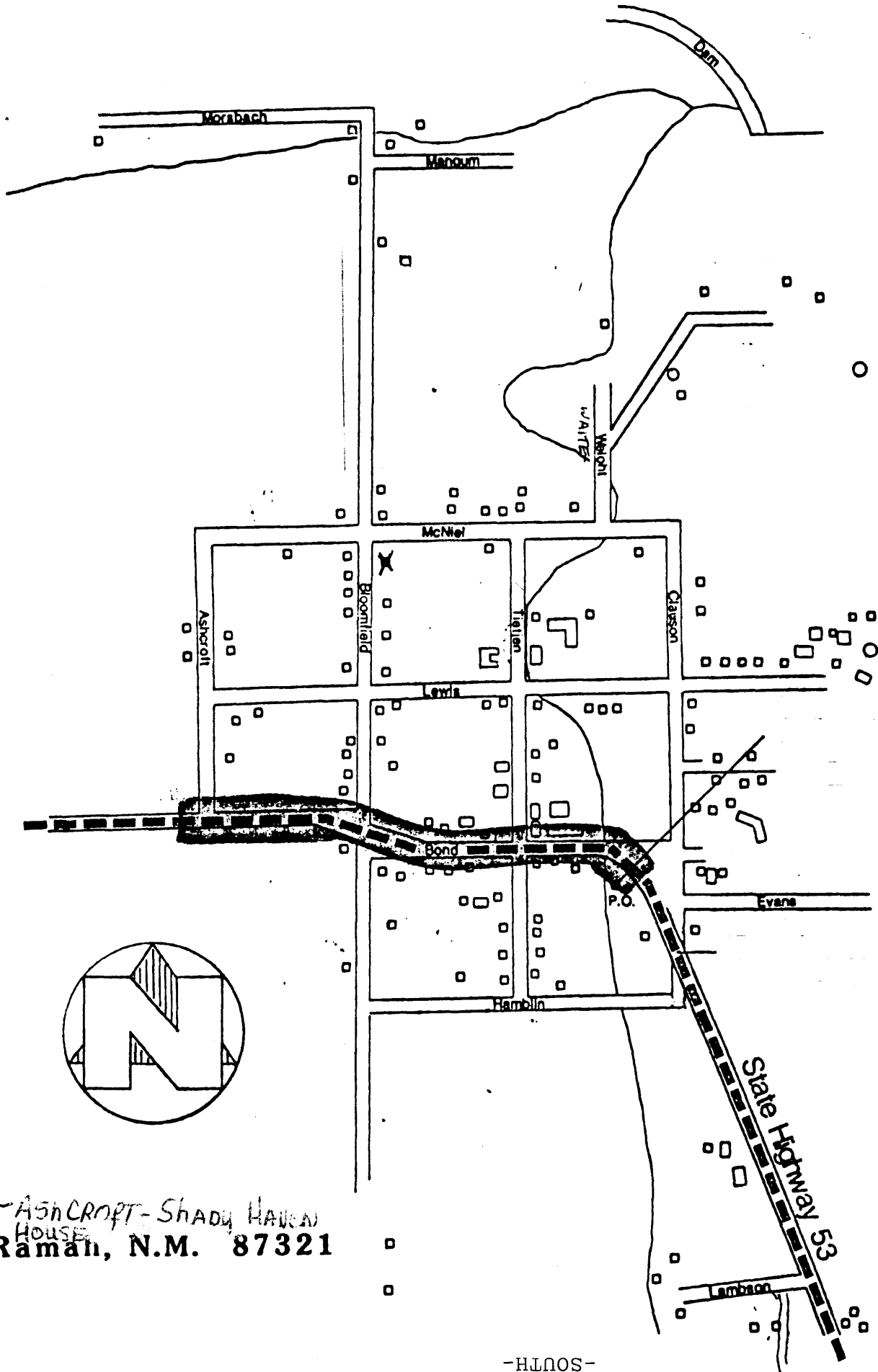
- ⊗ = WALKS = Flag Stone
 - H = DOORS
 - = WINDOWS
 - x = Roses
 - = TREES + Bushes
- 1 ACRE

2nd Floor

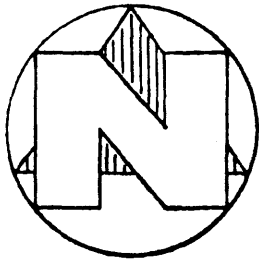


North-

-EAST-



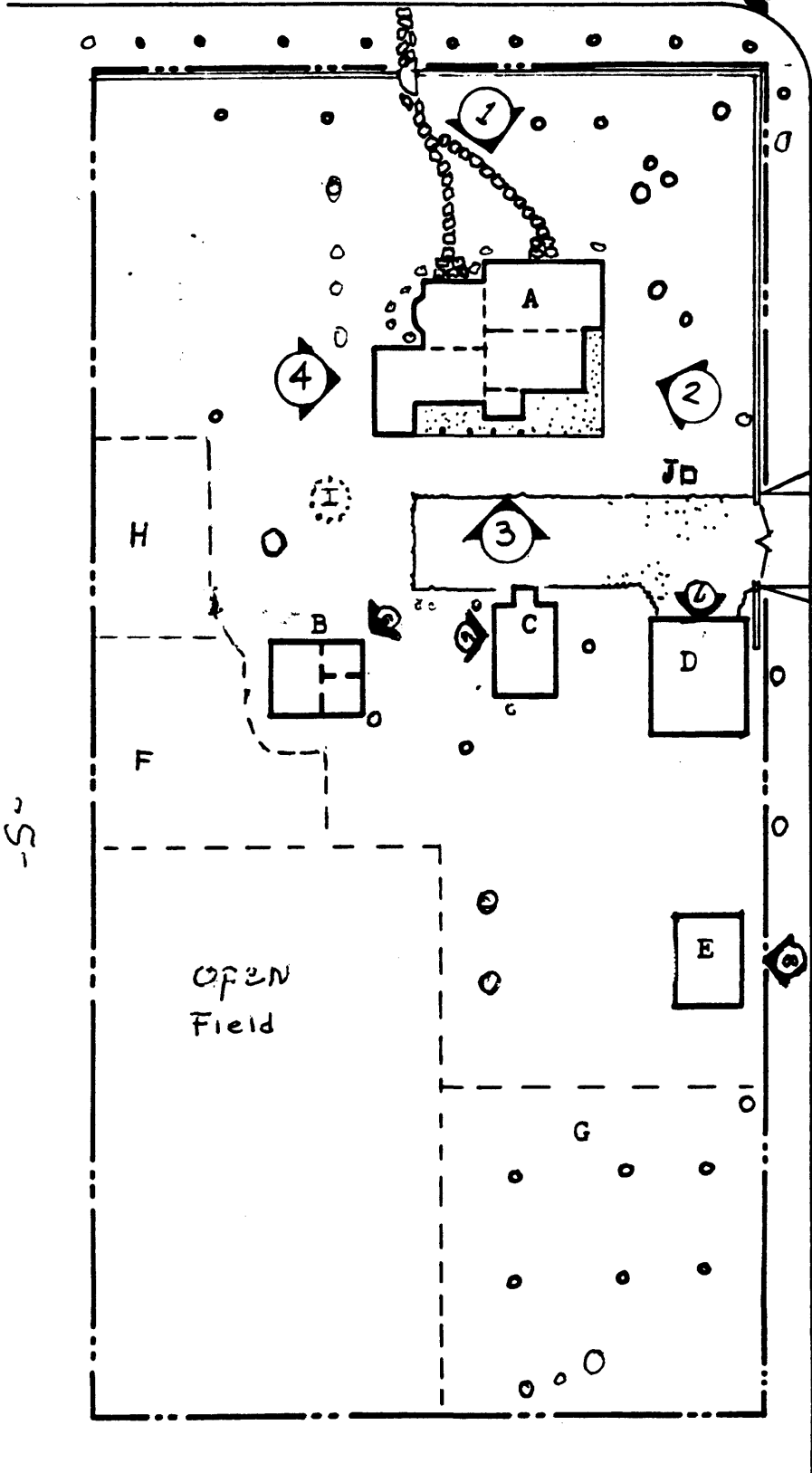
-EAST-



X-Ashcroft-Shadow Haven
 House
 Ramah, N.M. 87321

-SOUTH-

BLOOMFIELD ST.



LEGEND

- A Residence
- B Wood shed/shower-house
- C Wash-house/root cellar
- D Garage
- E Cottage
- F Garden Veg,
- G Orchard
- H FLOWER GARDEN
- * GARRIBIDE GEN. PIT
- ◉ Photos
- JD OLD Well
- Boundary

McNIEL ST.

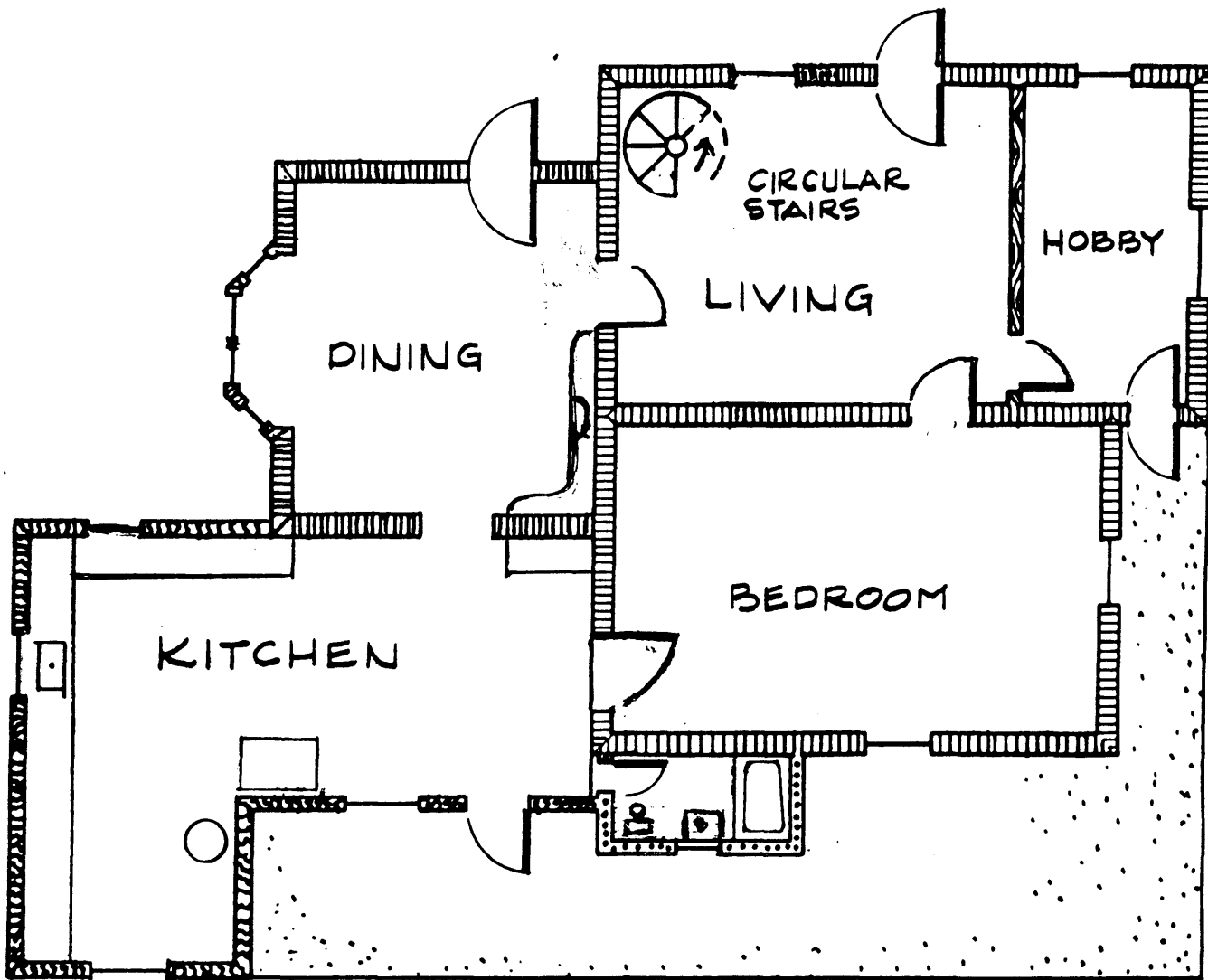
-S-

-N-



STATE
 2 BIKS N of Hwy #53 -3-
 NO STREET SIGNS OR HOUSE NUMBERS

PROJECT: ASHCROFT RESIDENCE RAMAH, NEW MEXICO	-ARCHITECT- JACK HARRIS
	-DATE- 11/21/88



FLOOR PLAN-

SCALE: 1" = 1/8"

LEGEND



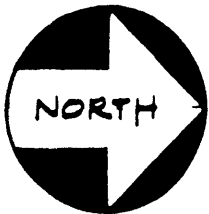
ORIGINAL



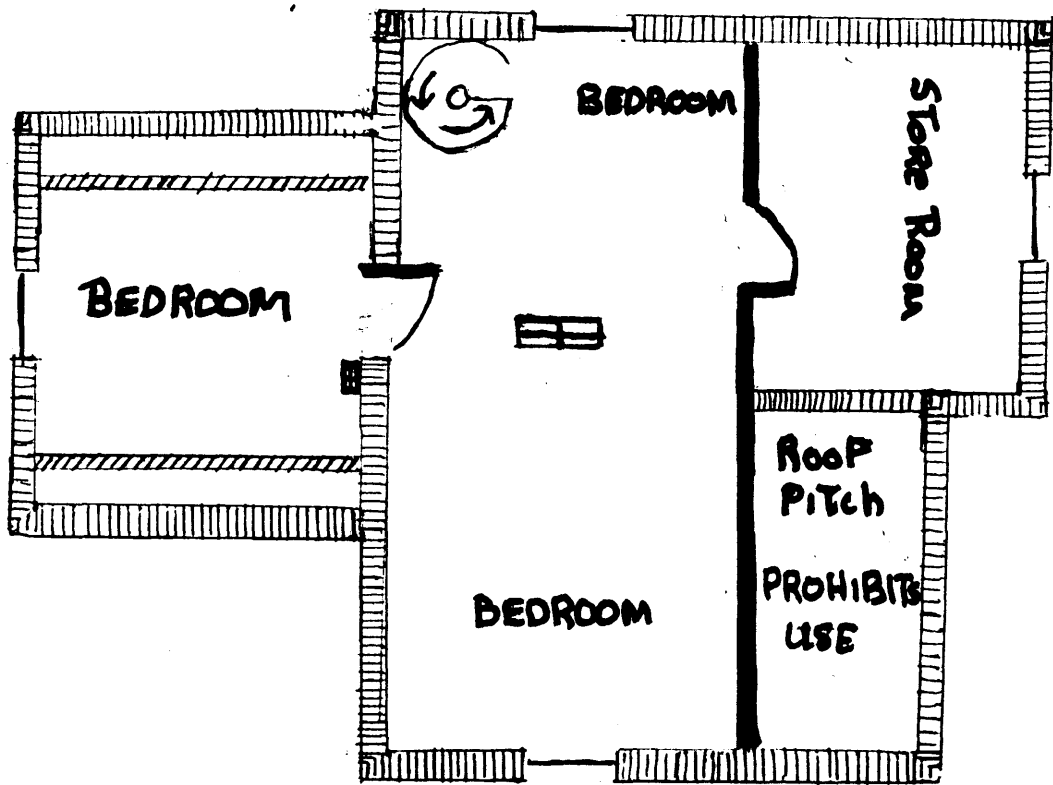
WOOD }
STUCCO } — ADDITION (1904)



LAST ADDITION (1917)
ADDOBE + STUCCO



PROJECT: ASHCROFT RESIDENCE RAMAH, NEW MEXICO	ARCHITECT JACK M. HARRIS
	DATE 11-21-88



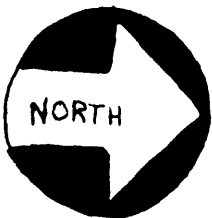
2ND FLOOR PLAN

LEGEND

CHIMNEYS
 ▨ - FLUE TILE-BRICK
 ▩ - ADOBE-PLASTERED

▨ ORIGINAL
 ▧ INSIDE WALL
 ▩ LATHE-PLASTER
 ■ WOOD-PANELLING

ADDITION
 1983-Replaced
 Portion That was
 Part of ORIGINAL



PROJECT:
 ASHCROFT RESIDENCE
 RAMAH NEW MEXICO

R. HARRINGTON

DATE
 2-21-88