

PH0685046
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RECEIVED SEP 2 1978
NOV 2 1978
DATE ENTERED

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC
Rancho Bonito
AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER
Gran Quivera Road
CITY, TOWN
So of Mountainair
STATE
New Mexico
CODE
35
VICINITY OF Mountainair
COUNTY
Torrence
CODE
57

NOT FOR PUBLICATION
CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT
1

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL
			<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER: Vacant

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME
Lena & Don Shaffer
STREET & NUMBER
411 Wellesley S.E.
CITY, TOWN
Albuquerque

STATE
New Mexico

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.
Torrence County Courthouse
STREET & NUMBER
CITY, TOWN
Estancia

STATE
New Mexico

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE
New Mexico Register of Cultural Properties
DATE
7-15-77

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS
New Mexico Historic Preservation Program
CITY, TOWN
Santa Fe

STATE
New Mexico

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Pop Shaffer's Rancho Bonito consists of five structures all of which were built in the late 1930s. Though it was under cultivation to provide produce for the Shaffer Hotel in Mountainair; the primary purpose of Rancho Bonito was to provide workshop and display area for Shaffer's unique animal art.

The main entrance to the farm on State Road 14, one-half mile south of Mountainair, is decorated with cut and painted logs. The first structure encountered is the display house, which once served as the workshop. It is a frame (24-by-24-foot) gable-roofed structure. The exterior is decorated with logs and is colorfully painted. The chimney is log encased and one pediment has a red, white, and blue painted design. In the spring of 1978 there was a fire in the house and shortly after the house was rebuilt as it was originally.

Across the road from the display house is a swimming pool, a rock garden, and windmill. The swimming pool is not in use and the tower of the windmill has collapsed. South of the display house was a pond which was used for boating.

Southeast of the pond is the barn, the only building still in use. It is a frame building and has a gable roof and decorative log siding. On the doors are some of Shaffer's works, figures with milk pails and geometric designs. In the pediment is a log star burst and the name and date.

The tenant's house, northeast of the barn, is a stone house with a shed roof. The stone used is rough limestone and the parapet is of cobblestone. The chimney is of rough cut stone and there are geometric designs in the parapet. The house has four rooms and is currently vacant. The ceiling was originally of Celotex, but was damaged by water. The roof and ceiling have been replaced.

The workshop and chicken coop are beyond the house and barn. Both are small metal buildings; one with a shed roof and the other with a flat roof. Pop Shaffer's tools and equipment remain intact in the workshop.

Originally, Pop Shaffer's animals were displayed in the few acres around the structures. All the animals have been removed.

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 checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The ephemeral nature of the work of the folk environmentalist and the general public mistrust of such unusual works of art has often resulted in their destruction. Simon Rodia's Watts Towers, a major American monument, and James Hampton's Throne barely escaped destruction but are now recognized by the National Register and the Smithsonian Institution, respectively, as highly significant works by American folk artists. Although the environmental creations of Clem "Pop" Shaffer located in Mountainair, New Mexico have been relegated to the status of benign neglect, the visual evidence strongly suggests that we are faced with a folk art monument of major proportions and the responsibility for its preservation.

Clem "Pop" Shaffer was born in 1880 in Harmony, Indiana and moved with his new wife to Mountainair in 1908. Like many folk artists the heart of his life's work began later in life. In the 1920's he began work on the Hotel Shaffer at the urging of his wife. As he says in his autobiography, "In 1929 I built a dining room on the hotel also 8 more rooms the dining room is my unusual piece of work." By 1931 he had built the fence which runs along beside the Hotel Shaffer. "Then in 1937 I started to build my tenant a house and barn on the ranch I also built a show house for my wooden animals, I also built a work shop where I make all my wooden animals." Today these buildings -- the Hotel Shaffer, the cow barn, the show house, and the tenant's -- remain remarkably intact. The creatures that inhabit their walls as unusual ornament have not been vandalized, but serve to give an impression of the total universe, a very private universe, that "Pop" Shaffer created in this small, dying town.

At one time Mountainair was the "Pinto Bean Capital of the World." The Hotel Shaffer was an attractive and popular place to visit and we have evidence that as many as 12,000 people a year went on to Rancho Bonito to see the rest of Pop Shaffer's Wooden Zoo. In addition to his architectural work and ornament, Pop created hundreds of wooden, fantasy creatures or root monsters which were shown in the show house; larger animals were shown outside at the edge of the lake which once bordered the show house at the Rancho Bonito. Today seven examples of Pop Shaffer's root monsters are housed at the Museum of International Folk Art, a division of the Museum of New Mexico, and approximately twenty-five other creatures are still in the Hotel Shaffer. In addition, scrapbooks, an autobiography, professional photographs and perhaps even a technicolor film allow reconstruction and interpretation of the not too distant past when Pop Shaffer orchestrated his special utopia.

Like other artists, the folk art environmentalist seems to be driven by the need for expression, but in this case the expression often takes the form of a lifetime, single project which is guided by the desire to form an environment over which the artist has complete control. The unity of the artist's vision is readily apparent but the underlying motivation is much more difficult to discern. On the whole, works by American folk environmentalists seem to share no direct relationship with the art of the past or awareness of developments in the art of their contemporaries. They work outside the mainstream, intently focusing on an inner vision, the content, scope, and style of which

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Hemphill, Herbert W., Jr., editor. Folk Sculpture USA, The Brooklyn Museum, New York, 1976

Hemphill and Weisman, Herbert W., Jr., and Julia. Twentieth-Century American Folk Art and Artists, E.P. Dutton and Co., Inc., New York, 1974.

Horwitz, Elinor Lander. Contemporary American Folk Artists, J.P. Lippincott Co., Philadelphia and New York, 1975.

(continued)

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 14

UTM REFERENCES

A 13 386250 3818800
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

B
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

C

D

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

North: property line 237 feet north of north edge of swimming pool
 East: proposed fence line 250 feet east of east edge of workshop
 South: proposed fence line 245 feet south of south edge of barn
 West: property line 317 feet east of east corner of display house.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Ellen Threinen, Architectural Historian

August 29, 1978

ORGANIZATION

DATE

New Mexico Historic Preservation Program

505-827-2108

P.O. BOX 1829

TELEPHONE

Santa Fe

New Mexico

CITY OR TOWN

STATE

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE

LOCAL X

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

9/20/78

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

[Signature]

DATE

11/29/78

ATTEST Bill Lohmeyer

KEEPER OF

DATE

Nov 30, 1978

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
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CONTINUATION SHEET #1

ITEM NUMBER 8 & 9 PAGE 1

is the sole product of the artist. What the forces were that motivated Pop Shaffer to begin work on his animals and decorated buildings are not known, nor do we know what guided the creation of such a unified vision. We do know that there are no other examples of folk environments on this scale in New Mexico and that efforts should be made to preserve this humorous and impressive monument to one man's vision.

Christine Mather, Curator of
Spanish Colonial Art
Museum of International Folk Art

Major Bibliographical References (Cont.)

Kresge Art Gallery. Michigan Folk Art, Michigan State University Board of Trustees, East Lansing, 1976.

Walker Art Center. Naives and Visionaries, E.P. Dutton, New York, 1974.

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NOV 14 1978

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CONTINUATION SHEET #2

ITEM NUMBER 8

PAGE 1

Clem "Pop" Shaffer's Rancho Bonito is a unique folk expression in New Mexico. It consists of simple structures of wood and stone which were showplaces for his "root animals". He placed his animals in and around his mountainair farm creating a personal environment, a personal utopia. Other folk environments found in the U.S. are, like Rancho Bonito, the result of one person's vision and hard work and are made from found materials. It is, however, unusual to find this extensive an environment created out of natural wood forms and patriotic feeling.

Shaffer's deep patriotic feeling is illustrated not only by his frequent use of red, white and blue, but his gifts to Presidents. In 1941 Shaffer gave one of his animals to Roosevelt and in 1947 he gave an ashtray to Elenor Roosevelt. In 1953 he gave a lamp and chair to President Eisenhower.

Upon "Pop" Shaffer's death in 1964 nearly the entire collection was purchased by a trading post operation to serve as a tourist attraction. Only the animals in the Shaffer Hotel and the Museum of International Folk Art remain well cared for.

Rancho Bonito itself has not suffered from similar neglect because of the time and energy the Don Shaffer family has put into it. They are currently repairing the Display House which had burned. Thus Rancho Bonito remains intact as the most complete expression of New Mexico's singular "Pop" Shaffer.

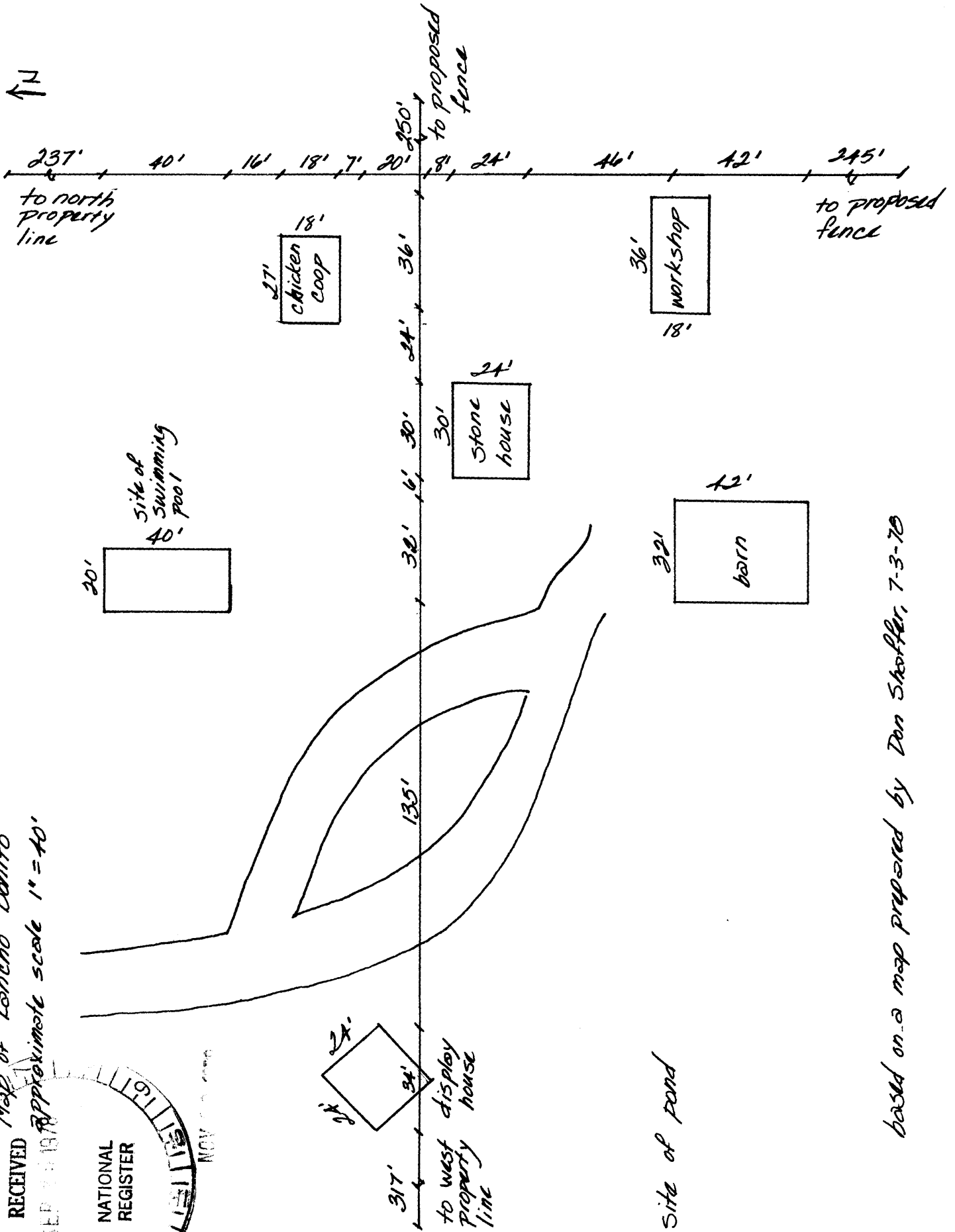
Map of Rancho Bonito
Approximate scale 1" = 40'

RECEIVED

SEP 20 1978

NATIONAL REGISTER

NOV 2 1978



based on a map prepared by Don Sheaffer, 7-3-78