1. NAME OF PROPERTY

Historic Name: **O'KEEFFE, GEORGIA, HOME AND STUDIO**

Other Name/Site Number: N/A

2. LOCATION

Street & Number: County Road 164, House No. 13 Not for publication: N/A

City/Town: Abiquiú Vicinity: N/A

State: NM County: Rio Arriba Code: 039 Zip Code: 87510

3. CLASSIFICATION

Ownership of Property		Category of Property	
Private:	X	Building(s):	X
Public-Local:	___	District:	___
Public-State:	___	Site:	___
Public-Federal:	___	Structure:	___
		Object:	___

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing	
3	1	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
3	1	Total

Number of Contributing Resources Previously Listed in the National Register: N/A

Name of Related Multiple Property Listing: N/A

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.

Signature of Certifying Official Date

State or Federal Agency and Bureau

In my opinion, the property ____ meets ____ does not meet the National Register criteria.

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
___ Determined eligible for the National Register
___ Determined not eligible for the National Register
___ Removed from the National Register
___ Other (explain): ____________________

Signature of Keeper Date of Action

6. FUNCTION OR USE

Historic:	Domestic	Sub:	Single Dwelling Professional (Artist's Studio)
Current:	Recreation & Culture Education	Sub:	Museum Cultural landscape

7. DESCRIPTION

ARCHITECTURAL CLASSIFICATION: Colonial/Early 20th-Century American Movements
Spanish Colonial/Spanish-Pueblo Revival

MATERIALS:	House	Studio/Bedroom
Foundation:	Rock and adobe plaster	Rock and adobe plaster
Walls:	Adobe brick with cement stucco finish	Adobe brick with cement stucco finish
Roof:	Wood, waterproofing membrane	Wood, waterproofing membrane
Other:	Wood	

Describe Present and Historic Physical Appearance.

The Georgia O'Keeffe home and studio is located in Abiquiú, New Mexico, an unincorporated village situated on a mesa overlooking the Chama River Valley roughly 50 miles northwest of Santa Fe. The artist Georgia O'Keeffe (1887–1986) purchased the property from the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Santa Fe in late 1945, after eyeing the house and grounds—and attempting to buy them—for some ten years.[1] The artist's house, a detached studio, and a large garden, all on about 4 acres, are of historic significance. The property also includes a bomb shelter that O'Keeffe had constructed north of the studio in the late 1950s. A fourth building on the property—a storage shed built by the Foundation in 1994—does not have sufficient historic association or integrity to be declared significant.

O'Keeffe discovered the house in the early 1930s during one of her frequent visits to northern New Mexico. While driving by the walled grounds of the property on her way through Abiquiú, the artist happened to glimpse a rambling adobe structure and the remnants of a garden through a break in the adobe wall. Once she determined that the house was unoccupied, she climbed the wall to explore the grounds. She found that the property had its own well and a system of *acéquias*, or irrigation ditches, which could provide for the cultivation of crops, trees, and flowers not otherwise found in the high desert. The source of the water was a natural spring located above the town on the mesa. As part of the original Spanish land grant that had established Abiquiú in the 1730s, each property in the village collective had access to the water from the spring.

O'Keeffe perceived the potential of these features for her future in New Mexico. "I wanted to own it because I wanted a garden, so I wouldn't have to go clear to Santa Fe for a head of lettuce," she said in 1981, describing one of the hardships she encountered during her frequent summer painting trips into the rugged area north of Abiquiú.[2] Despite O'Keeffe's desire for a garden to make her self-sufficient, she would subsequently claim throughout her life it was the sight of a double wooden door in the center of a long wall in the patio that compelled her to buy the house. "That wall with the door in it was something I had to have," she said repeatedly.[3]

In 1940, after repeated attempts to buy the Abiquiú property had failed, O'Keeffe bought another property 12 miles north of Abiquiú. This property comprised a small adobe house and 8 acres located within the 30,000-acre confines of a dude ranch known as Ghost Ranch, an area that O'Keeffe had been visiting since the early 1930s (during the same period in which she was exploring Abiquiú and its environs). Situated at the base of spectacular pink and yellow cliffs that O'Keeffe frequently painted, the house at Ghost Ranch became a place of artistic renewal and a yearly retreat from the pressures of the New York art world and the social demands generated by the activities of her husband, Alfred Stieglitz (1864–1946), the pioneer photographer and modern art impresario.

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[1] Georgia O'Keeffe, *Georgia O'Keeffe* (New York: Penguin Books, 1988, reprint ed.), commentary to plate 82.

[2] Georgia O'Keeffe, taped interview with Laura Soullière, Abiquiú, New Mexico, March 25, 1981, courtesy of the National Park Service, Santa Fe, New Mexico.

[3] O'Keeffe, *Georgia O'Keeffe*, commentary to plate 82.

When O'Keeffe finally acquired the house and grounds in Abiquiú in 1945, she did not relinquish the smaller Ghost Ranch house. Instead she became the owner of two properties within 12 miles of one another, both of which she maintained for the rest of her life. The house at the Ghost Ranch continued to serve as an artistic and spiritual retreat. But with O'Keeffe's permanent move to New Mexico from New York City in 1949, the house in Abiquiú became her primary residence until 1984, when she moved to Santa Fe two years prior to her death at age 98.

In 1989, three years after the artist's death, the Georgia O'Keeffe Foundation became owner and manager of the Abiquiú property. The Foundation, a nonprofit organization dedicated to perpetuating the artistic legacy of Georgia O'Keeffe for the public benefit, began a program to preserve and maintain the house and its contents as one of the most important artist's home and studio complexes of the twentieth century. Because the house in Abiquiú passed intact from O'Keeffe's estate to the Foundation, it accurately reflects the artist's spirit and lifestyle, therefore possessing a high degree of structural and associative integrity. The Foundation currently conducts tours of O'Keeffe's residence in Abiquiú for the interested public on a limited, by-appointment-only basis.

Architecturally, O'Keeffe's Abiquiú residence is a complicated overlay of periods and styles. The house combines elements from the Spanish vernacular courtyard house of northern New Mexico and from mid-twentieth-century domestic modernism, resulting in an idiosyncratic architectural creation. O'Keeffe's eclectic creation was intentional, for, as she commented in an interview in 1981, "I didn't want a Spanish house; I didn't want an Indian house, [or] a Mexican house; I wanted *my* house!"[4]

O'Keeffe began with a ruined nineteenth-century adobe compound, the basic structure of which she retained during a three-year rehabilitation from 1946 to 1949, executed in collaboration with Maria Chabot (b. 1913), her friend and assistant in the 1940s. The style of the compound is consistent with what is generally defined as Spanish Colonial residential architecture in New Mexico, featuring thick adobe walls with a flat roof supported by a system of vigas and latillas.[5] The house comprises three one-story adobe brick structures that form an integral unit connected by covered walkways called *zaguáns* (nos. 7 and 20 on the floor plan). The floor plan is patio-centered, in which a single file of rooms encloses an interior courtyard known as a *plazuela* (no. 23).[6] A double-wide *zaguán* (no. 7) originally provided the main entrance to the *plazuela* during the nineteenth century. The doorway of this entrance is fitted with a large, rustic, double

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[4]O'Keeffe, taped interview with Soullière, March 25, 1981.

[5]Bainbridge Bunting, in his classic *Taos Adobes* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, reprint ed., 1992, p. 4), cautioned against rigid definitions of Spanish Colonial architecture: "No single type of Spanish Colonial house plan dominates in Northern New Mexico or is typical of the period. Many persons think of the patio-centered plan as characteristic of Spanish residential architecture, but most houses in New Mexico were not large enough for so ambitious a plan." Single axis or L-shaped plans were much more common (p. 5). The O'Keeffe house thus represents a relatively uncommon manifestation of local traditions.

[6]Christopher Wilson discusses the origins of the patio-centered type of house in "When a Room is the Hall," p. 18, in Boyd C. Pratt and Chris Wilson, eds., *The Architecture and Cultural Landscape of North Central New Mexico*, field guide for the Twelfth Annual Vernacular Architectural Forum, Santa Fe, New Mexico, May 15–18, 1991.

wooden gate containing an inset pedestrian door. Connected to the *plazuela* section of the house is a wing of rooms (nos. 11–19) that may have been built originally in the 1730s and then were added on to in the 1850s.

A respect for these historic features notwithstanding, O'Keeffe and Chabot's changes to the traditional structure to make the house more livable and suited to O'Keeffe's specific needs could only be called "modern." With certain changes, O'Keeffe followed progressive architectural tendencies of the period: she opened up the interior space to make it more functional, assigned public and private activities to specific sections of the house, and planned the placement of large windows to frame dramatic views of the landscape and to bring natural light into the interiors.[7]

Chabot researched materials to find those that were the most contemporary and practical. She replaced traditional mud floors with cement and cork floors in rooms where more durable materials were required. She installed modern plumbing, gas, and electrical systems, and added Panelray heaters—a type of butane-fired, radiant-heat wall panel—to rooms where fireplaces had historically provided the only source of heat. She added florescent lighting in some rooms and introduced skylights, which have no precedent in New Mexican vernacular architecture but which brought more light into traditionally dark interiors.

Among the many changes, however, the most assertively modernist alteration of the compound was the addition of enormous picture windows that totally broke with the tradition of Spanish Colonial architecture, in which, for defense reasons, small windows tended to open to the *plazuela* rather than to the outside. The new, large, International-style windows not only flooded certain rooms with natural light, but also they either connected interiors of the complex to expansive views of the surrounding landscape to the north and east or provided a more intimate view of the lush garden to the south.

After the rehabilitation, O'Keeffe was left with an expansive 5,000-square-foot complex. The parts of the complex consisted of: 1) a house containing living and dining spaces, an enclosed central patio, the "Roofless Room" (O'Keeffe's version of an indoor-outdoor patio), two bathrooms, guest rooms, a storage area for artwork, a library, a kitchen, a pantry, a laundry room, and an historic room called the Indian Room; 2) a smaller, detached building containing the artist's studio and bedroom; 3) a second courtyard located between the house and the studio; 4) a parking area; and 5) a garden enclosed by a massive adobe wall. The property is bounded on the east and west by arroyos, on the south by a dirt road leading into Abiquiú, and on the north by the sheer face of the mesa that drops 60 feet to U.S. Highway 84 below. Thus situated on the very edge of the mesa northeast of the village plaza, the 3.9-acre site commands panoramic views of the Chama River and the Plaza Blanca to the north, and of the Abiquiú Mesa and the Sangre de Cristo mountains of Santa Fe to the east.

From her first glimpse of the Chama River Valley in 1931, O'Keeffe was drawn to the

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[7]Richard Brettell, unpublished manuscript, 1994, Georgia O'Keeffe Foundation Archives, Abiquiú, New Mexico. George Nelson and Henry Wright provide the classic formula for the progressive modern home in *Tomorrow's House: A Complete Guide for the Home-Builder* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1945). The date of publication is nearly concurrent with O'Keeffe's rehabilitation of the adobe compound, suggesting that these ideas were "in the air" and that O'Keeffe was aware of them.

landscape's spare geometry—and also to the area's cultural independence, which over time had fostered a belief in the virtue of its own isolation. For much of its history a provincial community of largely Hispanic origins, Abiquiú today is located on U.S. Highway 84, a major route linking the town south to the larger cities of Española, Santa Fe, and Albuquerque and north to Tierra Amarilla, Chama, and Durango. Nonetheless, as late as the 1930s, when Georgia O'Keeffe began to explore the rugged landscape near Abiquiú, the community remained an insular one, accessible only over a poorly maintained dirt road, some 24 miles in distance from Española, the nearest sizable town. Before the road was paved in the 1950s, the trip by automobile between the two places could take as long as a day.

Despite Abiquiú's history of geographic and cultural isolation, its location on the southern bank of the Chama River has been home to numerous peoples, beginning nearly 5,000 years ago when archaeological evidence establishes the earliest date of a prehistoric Indian pueblo.[8] From that period up to about 400 A.D., the site was occupied by prehistoric Indians. From about 1200 to 1500 A.D., groups of Tewa Pueblo Indians located there and then moved on, abruptly abandoning their settlements.

Spanish colonists came next to the Chama Valley, but not until the 1730s.[9] Although the Spaniards had established settlements in New Mexico as early as the 1600s, their efforts to locate in the Chama Valley—the empire's northernmost frontier outpost—were delayed until the early 1700s. At that time, Spanish settlers petitioned the governor in Santa Fe for grants to farm the river's fertile bottomlands. Repeated attacks from nomadic bands of Utes and Comanches forced the settlers to abandon their site along the river in 1747.

However, in 1750, by order of the governor, the Abiquiú land grant was refounded, this time with a combination of Spanish colonists and *genízaros*. The *genízaros* were non-Pueblo, Christianized Indians whom the Spanish had taken into indentured service. In time, the *genízaros* received their freedom and grants of land to farm in the outposts of the Spanish empire. In exchange for this, the governor required the *genízaros* to serve in frontier militias that functioned as defensive buffers between the marauding Indians and the Spanish colonists. When the governor ordered the Abiquiú land grant to be reestablished, he directed the *genízaros* to settle around a fortified plaza built on the mesa high above the Chama Valley, a location that was easier to defend than the original settlement down along the river had been. The new site with its *genízaro* mission was called Santo Tomás de Abiquiú, now the present village of Abiquiú.[10]

Just as the history of Abiquiú reflects elements of both Indian and Hispanic cultures, so too does the history of the structure that became the future home of Georgia O'Keeffe. The site of the structure is the most commanding and strategic one in Abiquiú, and consequently, it is likely that humans inhabited the site for several hundred years. Subsequent occupants probably

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[8] Peter Linder,"The Settlement of Abiquiu," unpublished manuscript, 1978, pp. 1–2, O'Keeffe Foundation Archives.

[9] John L. Kessell, "Sources for the History of a New Mexico Community: Abiquiu," *New Mexico Historical Review*, 54, no. 4 (1979), p. 255.

[10] Linder,"Settlement of Abiquiu," pp. 8, 12–3.

incorporated the foundations and walls of earlier adobe structures, contributing to the organic accumulation of rooms that eventually formed the basic configuration of the house that O'Keeffe acquired in 1945.

The exact chronology of this building sequence is not known, nor at this time is the precise history of ownership prior to O'Keeffe (both require further research).[11] However, because the compound was essentially rebuilt in the period from 1946 to 1949 from a state of near ruin (breached walls, collapsed roofs, parts of rooms washed away), the structure must be classified as nationally significant from the date of its rehabilitation by Georgia O'Keeffe.[12]

The general evolution of the house may be surmised through the speculations of Maria Chabot in letters to O'Keeffe in March 1946.[13] Chabot's conjectures were based upon her understanding of Indian and Hispanic adobe building traditions. By the time Chabot met O'Keeffe in 1940, she had acquired considerable knowledge of Southwestern vernacular architecture. She had studied archaeology and ethnology in Mexico City before coming to Santa Fe in 1934. In that year, she was hired to photograph Spanish Colonial designs as part of a New Deal project. Two years later, she served as executive secretary of the New Mexico Association on Indian Affairs and eventually worked for the federal government as production advisor of the Indian Arts and Crafts

[11]Georgia O'Keeffe obtained original nineteenth-century Spanish deeds concerning the sale of various parcels of land in Abiquiú, which she apparently assumed were related to her house and land. Translation of the deeds by historian Frances Swadesh in 1972 revealed that only one of the documents referred to the property that O'Keeffe owned. From the information in the deed, Swadesh speculated that this site was likely that of the first colonial dwelling in Abiquiú, the Montoya house built in 1734. If her conclusion is correct, it would establish the history of the O'Keeffe house as beginning about 1734 (Swadesh correspondence to O'Keeffe, September 20, 1972, O'Keeffe Foundation Archives). Concerning the history of the house in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Stephen James wrote: "The Montoya family abandoned the grant in 1748 because of attacks from hostile Indians. In 1750, the Spanish government resettled thirteen Indians [*genízaros*] at the Montoya house, but it is unclear whether they remained there. Four years later, the Spanish made another land grant to a much larger group of Indians on the site of present-day Abiquiu. It is likely that after this 1754 land grant, Indians occupied the existing Montoya house. Ownership of the property during the rest of the eighteenth century cannot be established, because of lack of records. . . . Tradition holds that the historic Chávez family of Abiquiu owned the O'Keeffe house during much of the nineteenth century. In the early nineteenth century, Francisco Antonio Chávez may have acquired the original Montoya house or built another dwelling on its site. After his death, the house may have passed to his son, José María Chávez. After José María's death in 1902, the house apparently passed to his son, J. M. C. Chávez, Sr., and later to his grandson, J. M. C. Chávez, Jr. In January 1941, Martin Bode, administrator of the estate of J. M. C. Chávez, Jr., conveyed the property to the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Santa Fe, which in turn sold it to Georgia O'Keeffe in December 1945. In 1964, O'Keeffe acquired additional acreage on the east and west sides of the house. Nevertheless, Chávez family ownership of the property cannot be confirmed by instruments of record at the courthouse" (James, *Historic American Buildings Survey: The Georgia O'Keeffe Home and Studio*, pp. 1–2, O'Keeffe Foundation Archives). As Frances Swadesh suggested in the letter to O'Keeffe dated September 20, 1972, many of the pertinent documents may still be in private hands in Abiquiú.

[12]Maria Chabot remembered that "much of [the house] was eroded, destroyed by the elements. I was trying to put the house into useful shape for [Georgia], but fifty percent of it was gone" (telephone conversation with Sarah Burt, Georgia O'Keeffe Foundation, June 6, 1997).

[13]Chabot correspondence to O'Keeffe, March 2, March 3, and March 18, 1946, Alfred Stieglitz-Georgia O'Keeffe Archive, Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, New Haven [hereafter referred to as Beinecke Library].

Board, during which time she "was in 30 reservations and . . . knew a lot about Indian architecture."[14]

Because of Chabot's knowledge of adobe building techniques, O'Keeffe engaged her to oversee the rehabilitation of the compound.[15] O'Keeffe's own on-site involvement with the project became limited after the death of Alfred Stieglitz in July 1946. As executrix of his will, O'Keeffe stayed in New York City to distribute his large art collection, a process that took three years—virtually the same time frame required to make the Abiquiú residence habitable. During this period, Chabot wrote O'Keeffe almost daily about the progress of the house, sending detailed plans of the complex and her analyses of what was required to most effectively rebuild it. From these letters to O'Keeffe, a sense of the chronology of the compound can be gleaned.[16]

According to Chabot upon her initial examination of the ruin, the oldest part of the main house was the northwest wing (the rooms numbered 5 and 11–19 on the floor plan). This section with its double row of variably sized rooms had more in common, she thought, with Indian rather than with Spanish domestic architecture, suggesting that it may have been built by *genízaros* living in Abiquiú. Chabot wrote to O'Keeffe about finding "puddled" foundations for this part of the house, a technique in which mud is poured into forms to create courses, characteristic of Pueblo Indian practices.[17] Chabot speculated that the Spanish/*genízaro* settlers of the 1700s built this wing on the foundations of an abandoned Tewa pueblo, in the process following its floor plan. She further distinguished between the age of the wing and the rest of the house by noting the wing's state of disrepair; its lack of windows and the prevalence of low doorways for defense reasons; and its heavy, blackened vigas. She was particularly interested in the remains of "an old Indian kitchen" (room no. 15 on the floor plan) with its large, unusual cooking fireplace, known today as a "shepherd's bed fireplace," a long shelf built over a corner firebox.[18] Even before O'Keeffe purchased the house, the locals referred to the old Indian kitchen as the "Indian Room,"

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[14]Sharon Niederman, "The Active, Artful Life of Maria Chabot," *Santa Fe Reporter,* August 12–18, 1992, pp. 29–30. The quote is from the Chabot telephone conversation with Burt, June 6, 1997.

[15]O'Keeffe had employed Chabot for several years at the Ghost Ranch house, managing the mechanics of O'Keeffe's daily life there and organizing her camping and painting trips into the surrounding desert; see Roxana Robinson, *Georgia O'Keeffe: A Life* (New York: Harper & Row, 1989), pp. 443–44. In O'Keeffe's 1981 interview with Soullière, she remembered Chabot's enthusiasm for the project: "She was crazy to do a house and she was crazy to do this house."

[16]Chabot correspondence to O'Keeffe, 1945–1949, Beinecke Library.

[17]Chabot to O'Keeffe, March 8, 1946, Beinecke Library. Bunting (*Taos Adobes*, p. 6) noted that Indian builders set the first course of adobe wall on the ground, while the Spanish formed rough stone foundations upon which they set a layer of sun-baked adobe bricks.

[18]Chabot to O'Keeffe, March 2, 1946, and March 3, 1946, Beinecke Library. The term "shepherd's bed fireplace" may not be an accurate one as it is applied today. In *Taos Adobes* (p. 9), Bunting suggested that this type of fireplace was more likely used for cooking in earlier times and is not really associated with a bed provided in shelters for sheepherders, as has been assumed because of the length of the shelf.

and stories about Indian traders and Indian rituals are still associated with it.[19]

Chabot further speculated that the rooms enclosing the plazuela (nos. 6, 8, 9, 10 on the floor plan) were later added on the southeast of the old wing, probably during the nineteenth century. These rooms, more characteristic of the Spanish tradition in their proportions, were in better repair, had less heavy vigas, and possessed what Chabot thought were less pleasing dimensions than the older rooms.[20] Abiquiú lore historically assigns ownership of the property during this period to the Chávez family, the most prominent member of which was José María Chávez (1801–1902).[21] His reputation appears to have been based on his meritorious service as a brigadier general of the local militia during the Civil War and on his extraordinarily long life. Chávez is credited with adding to the compound in the mid-1800s and with making such improvements as bringing in loads of soil to establish a garden, adding the adobe wall around the garden, and building the second courtyard and a *tepeste*, or sheltered corral, on the north side of the main house.[22]

The Chávez family put the property up for sale during the 1930s. In early 1941, it passed to the Archdiocese of Santa Fe through the will of J. M. C. Chávez, Jr., the grandson of the general.[23] The Catholic Church had planned to build a school on the property, but the funds were not available at the time, and the property instead became a community stable for pigs and cattle.

O'Keeffe pressed the Church to sell it, and the archbishop finally signed the deed over to her in late December 1945.[24]

Chabot began the enormous rehabilitation project in March 1946. The first phase lasted into the fall. The project was extremely labor intensive and was accomplished entirely by unskilled laborers that Chabot employed from the village. With this crew, she orchestrated the building of new foundations for the house and studio with 78 truckloads of rock and dirt for mud plaster, the reconstruction of the garden wall with thousands of handmade adobe bricks, the bulldozing of

[19]Brettell, unpublished manuscript, O'Keeffe Foundation Archives, n.p.

[20]Chabot to O'Keeffe, March 3, 1946, Beinecke Library.

[21]Chabot to O'Keeffe, March 11, 1946, Beinecke Library.

[22]Chabot to O'Keeffe, March 18, 1946, Beinecke Library.

[23]Rio Arriba County records, O'Keeffe Foundation Archives.

[24]O'Keeffe, written statement to Souillière, March 5, 1981; Robinson, *Georgia O'Keeffe*, pp. 448–49; Rio Arriba County records, O'Keeffe Foundation Archives.

the garden, and the removal of dirt from sections of the roof that had not yet collapsed.[25] During 1946, she bombarded O'Keeffe, preoccupied in New York City, with letters describing her progress and asking for directions. When O'Keeffe visited the site that summer, she found that the structure was far enough along that she could assign functions to the rooms and begin to plan interior finishing materials.

Although there were many decisions to be made about the interior of the house, decisions about the exterior required less consideration. From the first stage of their collaboration, O'Keeffe and Chabot decided to work with the existing building, assuring the Church that they would maintain the Spanish Colonial style.[26] They changed very little of the structure erected by the Chávez family, rebuilding most foundations and walls in their original locations.[27] The changes that O'Keeffe and Chabot did make to the floor plan were borne out of necessity or to modernize the house. First, Chabot enlarged a room that had half washed away at the northeast corner of the main house to make a generous-sized bedroom (no. 4). Secondly, she moved outward a section of the north wall to fashion a large, two-car garage (no. 19). Finally, Chabot told O'Keeffe that a room at the west end of the old wing (no. 14) had entirely collapsed, making it impossible to restore the original shape. The two women agreed that it be turned it into a modern guest bathroom to which Chabot added an unusual curved wall on the south.

Perhaps the most significant change was Chabot's decision to turn what remained of the *tepeste* located across the courtyard north of the main house into O'Keeffe's studio, bedroom, and bath (nos. 1, 2, 3 on the floor plan), assigning to the historic structure a new use. "It was [originally] a corral with a carriage area where the old general had a buggy house that was part of the *tepeste*," Chabot indicated.[28]

At first, O'Keeffe resisted Chabot's concept for her studio: "I hadn't intended to use that part of the place at all, but Maria made such a fuss about it, I said well go ahead and fix it. I thought the studio would be where the garage is."[29] Chabot's insistence on where to put O'Keeffe's studio and bedroom resulted in the most dramatically sited rooms in the complex, literally pushed to the edge of the mesa where O'Keeffe, as Chabot grandly wrote her, could "see the dawn and feel all the turning of the universe. . . ."[30]

Although O'Keeffe and Chabot respected the exterior appearance and character of the nineteenth-century compound, they had a different concept for the interiors. In contrast to the

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[25]Maria Chabot, Cash Book 1, March 13, 1946 to October 6, 1946, O'Keeffe Foundation Archives.

[26]Chabot to O'Keeffe, November 1943, Beinecke Library.

[27]O'Keeffe, taped interview with Soullière, March 25, 1981.

[28]Chabot, telephone conversation with Burt, June 6, 1997.

[29]O'Keeffe, taped interview with Soullière, March 25, 1981.

[30]Chabot to O'Keeffe, March 18, 1946, Beinecke Library.

multipurpose use of rooms during the Hispanic occupation of the house, O'Keeffe assigned new and specialized uses for each room in order to more efficiently meet her personal and professional needs. She divided the house into four quadrants according to function. The north side consisted of utility spaces and the garage, the east of guest bedrooms and a bath, the south of book and art storage, and the west of living and dining spaces and another guest bedroom and bath at the far end of the attached wing. The most private part of the complex—which contained O'Keeffe's studio, bedroom, and bath—was completely separate from the house. This arrangement removed O'Keeffe from the mainstream of service activities such as gardening, food canning, meal preparation, and laundry. In this respect, the rehabilitation yielded a new work of architecture.[31]

The house is approximately 145 feet long (east-west) and 87 feet wide (north-south) and comprises fifteen rooms. The exterior of the house has an extended horizontality, in which the smooth regularity of the facade is broken by the additions to the outside walls of foundation and wall buttresses, a small storage closet, and chimneys.

The studio building is approximately 64 feet long (east-west) and 24 feet wide (north-south). The building comprises three rooms, including a studio/office with an immense, unpartitioned interior space (20 x 44.6 feet), and a small bedroom and bath. The *tepeste*, or old corral building, consisted of low adobe walls and an improvised roof made of vigas and tree branches to protect the animals in winter. When Chabot began work on the studio, the only solid construction left intact was a 6-foot-long and 5-foot-high mud wall that she retained and extended to the ceiling to close off the bedroom from the studio. The wall remnant became a ledge in O'Keeffe's bedroom upon which she displayed rocks and other found objects.[32]

In both buildings, Chabot completely rebuilt and reinforced the old foundations with stones set in mud plaster. Upon this solid and more stable substructure, she reconstructed the walls with 20,000 adobe bricks handmade from mud in the Abiquiú cemetery.[33] In the traditional manner, a smooth coat of mud plaster was then applied by a team of village women to finish the exterior and interior walls. O'Keeffe loved this finish, but she eventually grew tired of the need to have the exterior remudded every year. For practical reasons, she had the exterior surfaces of both the house and the studio building covered in cement stucco in 1959.[34]

Taking both buildings into account, there are sixteen exterior doors, giving nearly every room in the compound separate access to the outside. This arrangement resulted from the Hispanic *plazuela* tradition, in which each room is autonomous, with its own door leading into the central

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[31]Brettell, unpublished manuscript, O'Keeffe Foundation Archives, n.p.

[32]Chabot, telephone conversation with June O'Keeffe Sebring, July 18, 1997, and O'Keeffe, taped interview with Soullière, March 25, 1981.

[33]Chabot to O'Keeffe, March 15, 1946, Beinecke Library; Chabot, Cash Books, O'Keeffe Foundation Archives.

[34]Georgia O'Keeffe, letter to Claudia O'Keeffe, September 27, 1959, Beinecke Library.

patio. However, O'Keeffe and Chabot added doors in places where they would not traditionally have been, for example, in walls between rooms. Many of the exterior doors are made of rustic plank, are extremely weathered, and are likely to date to the nineteenth century. Some of the doors are original to the house; others, Chabot may have constructed from old, salvaged materials.[35] Three doors are modern and were installed during the 1946–1949 rehabilitation. They include two pairs of French doors—one pair of which opens from the dining room (no. 11) onto the patio (no. 23), the other of which opens from the kitchen (no. 18) to the north side of the house. The third modern door leads from the sitting room (no. 10) into the patio. Door heights vary and in some cases are lower than 6 feet from doorsill to lintel, reflecting the historic character that Chabot retained in parts of the house.

The most notable exterior door is the double, wood-plank one located on the south wall of the *plazuela*. The door leads into the patio from the *salita* (no. 9), the largest of the rooms built by the Chávez family, which may have served as a parlor. O'Keeffe always claimed that the door in the patio wall inspired her to own the house. Accordingly, the door and its long wall became the subject of two painting series, *In the Patio* and *Patio with Door*. "I'm always trying to paint that door—I never quite get it. It's a curse—the way I feel I must continually go on with that door," O'Keeffe stated in 1962.[36]

Originally, window openings in the compound were small, a defense measure in Spanish Colonial architecture. "Every window to the north was only about . . . 2 feet wide at the most and I think that was probably to keep it warm in the winter and cool in the summer," O'Keeffe remembered.[37] Chabot retained ten traditional-sized windows in the complex, some original to the house, others added. The small windows are mounted flush with the exterior surface of the walls and feature wood casements with jambs about 18 inches deep. These windows provide sharp contrast to the fixed plate-glass picture windows that O'Keeffe and Chabot installed in the studio (no. 1), O'Keeffe's bedroom (no. 2), the east bedroom (no. 4), the lower bedroom (no. 13), and the kitchen (no. 16). There is no precedent for windows of this scale in Spanish Colonial or Pueblo architecture—whether of the historic period or of the Pueblo Revival period in the 1920s and 1930s. The contemporary impact of such large windows on the design of the complex is particularly clear in the north facades of the kitchen and the studio building. Here, they create immense, shimmering expanses of glass on the adobe exterior and long, utilitarian ledges, more than 2 feet deep, on the interior, where O'Keeffe displayed her collections of rocks, fossils, and shells.

On the exterior of the compound, eleven fireplaces with chimneys that extend beyond the parapet provide vertical accents against the walls and sky. Five of the fireplaces are *fogons*, or corner fireplaces, the traditional New Mexican form. They are located in three bedrooms, the dining room, and the library. Two fireplaces are unusual: the fireplace in O'Keeffe's bedroom (no. 2) is

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[35] Chabot, telephone conversation with Burt, June 6, 1997.

[36] O'Keeffe interviewed in Katharine Kuh, *The Artist's Voice: Talks with Seventeen Artists* (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), p. 190.

[37] O'Keeffe, taped interview with Soullière, March 25, 1981.

based on a Hopi design and is not original to the Chávez period, while the shepherd's bed fireplace in the Indian Room (no. 15), which has been described, may date to the 1700s. The fireplaces in the east bedroom (no. 5), the library (no. 8), the *salita* (no. 9), and the dining room (no. 11) are also original to the Chávez period. The fireplaces of the studio (no. 1), the sitting room (no. 10), and the *salita* are set into side walls rather than the corners of the rooms. All fireplaces are made of adobe brick.

The house has no porches (portales) or stoops. However, there is a shade structure called a *resolana* built over the double doors of the dining room (no. 11). Also, Chabot installed a flagstone stoop with two steps up to the door of the studio building on the south side.

Because of the idiosyncratic nature of the O'Keeffe residence, the interiors vary widely in floor, ceiling, and wall finishes. Chabot's combination of old and natural materials with new and manmade materials provides striking contrasts of textures and surfaces. To deal adequately with the eclecticism of the interior, each room is briefly described below in the order indicated on the floor plan.

1) The studio: "I've done over an old house in Abiquiú—Have a huge studio," O'Keeffe wrote a friend in 1948. "White with a dirt floor—It is so large it is like being out doors—I have two tables ten feet long and four feet wide and two big saw horses and a large desk—and the room seems empty."[38] The studio interior, with its whitewashed adobe walls, is relatively austere despite its size. The fireplace and its banco hearth on the north wall provide the only architectural accents. The ceiling treatment consists of aspen beams rounded at the lower edges and latillas of peeled aspen poles. Chabot originally painted the ceiling white, but when one of O'Keeffe's assistants misunderstood the artist's cleaning instructions and washed the ceiling with water, the resulting effect so pleased O'Keeffe that she elected to leave it that way. Attached to several beams are florescent tube fixtures that span the width of the room. The tables O'Keeffe mentioned in the letter to her friend consist of two unusually large panels of plywood, which she set on sawhorses but did not permanently attach. She thus could move the panels to create different modules of work space depending on the requirements of the project. The room has four skylights and the largest picture window in the complex (5.5 feet high and 15 feet wide). Framed by the window, a stunning view of the Chama River Valley and the gray and white bluffs beyond seems the evocation of a vast O'Keeffe painting.

Originally, Chabot put an adobe floor in the studio. In the late 1970s, after O'Keeffe had developed macular degeneration, she carpeted the floor in white, and later pearl gray, so that she could see dark objects against the lighter color. Soon after, as O'Keeffe's deteriorating eyesight forced her to give up painting, she turned the studio into a sitting room, which she furnished with classic mid-century modern chairs by Charles Eames, Eero Saarinen, Harry Bertoia; Barwa lounge chairs by Edgar Bartolucci and Jack Waldheim; and a white pedestal coffee table by Eero Saarinen.[39] Today, the studio appears much as it did in the artist's later years. It contains a central grouping of furniture, two O'Keeffe paintings, two O'Keeffe sculptures, and one

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[38] O'Keeffe correspondence to Russell Vernon Hunter, October 30, 1948, Beinecke Library.
[39] O'Keeffe ordered much of the furniture from Knoll Associates in 1964; O'Keeffe Foundation Archives.

sculpture by her assistant Juan Hamilton (b. 1946). In her nineties, O'Keeffe had a daybed moved into the studio for attendants who often spent the night. Currently, at the west end of the room the Georgia O'Keeffe Foundation maintains an administrative office where O'Keeffe's own office was historically located.

2 and 3) O'Keeffe's bedroom and bath: Two steps up through a narrow door in the east wall of the studio lead into the artist's bathroom. The ceiling is low and consists of 4-inch-wide vigas and aspen latillas. O'Keeffe chose the utilitarian bathroom fixtures and economized on limited space in the small room by installing a clothes closet in the east wall and a clever shoe cabinet under the window on the south.

Another narrow doorway, cut in the north wall of the bathroom, accesses O'Keeffe's bedroom, one of the most remarkable spaces in the compound. The scale of the room is intimate, a perception encouraged by the low height of the ceiling. The ceiling treatment, of traditional Spanish vernacular construction, suggests the influence of Japanese teahouse architecture in its sensitive evocation of the natural world through Chabot's use of delicately scaled vigas and latillas made of peeled willow withes.[40] The color of the walls—a gray-brown adobe plaster—affords the room a warm, embracing quality. The floor, today covered with the same pearl gray carpet as the studio, is composed of black Vintylite, a Dupont plastic material invented in the late 1940s.[41] Furnishings are simple and few: a hospital bed brought in toward the end of O'Keeffe's life, a low table upon which sit two of the artist's own ceramics, a portable writing table, and an Eames wire-shell chair. In the corner of the east wall, Chabot built an extraordinary hooded fireplace based on Hopi and Zuñi pueblo designs but made more sculptural, more formally pure.[42] The ascetic quality of the bedroom is reinforced by a bronze hand that O'Keeffe later had embedded in the adobe wall by the fireplace. The hand is a fragment of a 12th–14th-
century Thai Buddhist sculpture, most likely of the bodhisattva Kannon, for the hand assumes the mudra for "fear not."

The unique quality of the room is ensured by fixed plate-glass windows joined to a wooden column at the northeast corner. The surfaces of the two windows cover most of the north and east walls. The windows provide an operatic view of the Chama River Valley, the Sangre de Cristo mountains of Santa Fe, and the highway to Española. The latter vista inspired one of O'Keeffe's best-known series of paintings, *The Road Past the View*. This spectacular engagement with the landscape creates a remarkable spatial play between interior intimacy and exterior vastness.

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[40]The ceiling is purely decorative rather than structural—as is the case in all the rooms of the compound, in which dropped ceilings conceal a flat, wood-plank roof above.

[41] Chabot had done a great deal of research on new materials in order to find the most practical and economical ones for the O'Keeffe residence. Chabot to O'Keeffe, April 30, 1949, Beinecke Library.

[42]Illustrations of such Indian corner chimney hoods can be found in Victor Mindeleff, *A Study of Pueblo Architecture in Tusayan and Cibola* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1989; originally pub. 1891), pp. 170–71.

4, 5, and 6) The east bedroom wing: O'Keeffe used this suite of two bedrooms with a connecting bath to house family guests. In O'Keeffe's later years, her youngest sister Claudia (1899–1984) often visited during the summer to oversee the cultivation of the artist's garden.[43] Claudia routinely stayed in the larger bedroom (no. 4), and her maid Fita stayed in the smaller one (no. 6). Chabot installed the ceilings of both bedrooms during the 1946–1949 rehabilitation, fashioning them out of spruce vigas and latillas of peeled aspen. She fitted the east wall of the larger bedroom with a big picture window, and installed a skylight in the bathroom. The walls of all three rooms are whitewashed adobe. The floors of the large bedroom and the bathroom are made of cork, a material touted after World War II for its durability, economy, and compatibility with modern domestic design.[44] The floor of the smaller bedroom is made of hardwood strips. Both bedrooms have corner fireplaces. The Georgia O'Keeffe Foundation recently (and temporarily) converted the larger bedroom into a security office and smaller one into a tour office. At this time, they are not open to the public.

8 and 9) The book room and the *salita*: These two rooms together form the storage wing of the house. O'Keeffe designated room no. 8 as her "book room," where she kept a library of about 3,000 volumes. This extraordinary collection comprises books and ephemera on a wide range of subjects that passionately engaged O'Keeffe (notably, Asian art, literature, and philosophy; travel; modern art and architecture; gardening; cooking; nutrition and health). The book room also contains books from Alfred Stieglitz's library, which O'Keeffe retained after his death and moved to Abiquiú. Included are an impressive number of works by the most important literary figures of the twentieth century, often inscribed by the authors to Stieglitz or to both O'Keeffe and Stieglitz. The books are housed on simple wooden shelves and in stacked orange crates. The room has one window on the south; adobe walls painted yellow; a ceiling composed of latillas installed in a herringbone pattern; and a floor made of unglazed, clay paving tiles laid over the mud floor. Over a simple plywood table placed in the south end of the room hangs a single bare light bulb on a wire, a minimal lighting treatment that O'Keeffe used throughout the house.

O'Keeffe chose the *salita*, the largest of the rooms built in the nineteenth century (16.6 feet wide and 30 feet long), to be the storage area for her paintings and art supplies. Accordingly, she built wooden racks into the east and north walls. The room also contains another large plywood table upon which O'Keeffe stretched canvases. In contrast to the ornate furnishings of the *salita* during the Chávez period, O'Keeffe made it austerely practical, adding two skylights over the work area, suspending three bare light bulbs, and leaving intact the pounded dirt floor. A tiny window in the south wall provides some ventilation. The door in the north wall, which O'Keeffe painted so frequently, opens into the *plazuela*. The book room, which still contains O'Keeffe's library, and the *salita*, which the Foundation uses for storage, are not open to the public.

10 and 11) The sitting room and dining room: One of O'Keeffe and Chabot's most extensive changes to the original interior of the house occurred in this area. During the Chávez period, this section of the house may have been two small bedrooms. O'Keeffe and Chabot fashioned a new,

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[43] Robinson, *Georgia O'Keeffe*, p. 543.

[44] "About Cork: An Architect's Handbook on Kencork Floors and Walls," pamphlet published by David E. Kennedy, Inc., Brooklyn, New York, 1948; O'Keeffe Foundation Archives.

30-foot expanse of space by removing the interior wall. Chabot turned the north wall of the area into a living/dining partition that stops two-thirds of the way into the space separating the two rooms and thus created a more open floor plan.[45] The changes resulted in a dining alcove that had formerly been a small, dark, interior room. Chabot brought natural light into the room by putting French doors into the east wall of the dining room and a double-wide door in the west wall, which opened into the Roofless Room (no. 12). To take full advantage of the natural light entering from the west, Chabot created a glass partition that can be inserted into the Roofless Room doorway in the winter months, thus allowing sunshine into the dining room while keeping cold air out.

In the sitting room, Chabot added two skylights and placed a vertical window in the middle of the south wall looking into the garden. In the early 1960s, O'Keeffe enlarged the garden window by replacing it with three nearly floor-to-ceiling glass panels, thus fashioning a wall of glass framing an ancient tamarisk tree outside. With the new window, O'Keeffe remarked, "you feel you've been sitting under that tree even if the glass is between you."[46] On the low, wide adobe ledge below the window, O'Keeffe placed a collection of smooth river rocks, many of which she picked up from along the banks of the Chama River.

The sitting room interior, in particular, exemplifies the combination of regionalist and modernist styles. Chabot introduced a deliberate rusticism into the room with a ceiling treatment of traditional vigas and rough, split-cedar *rajas* instead of the smooth latillas used elsewhere. The materials are old, some perhaps dating to the nineteenth century, and were either salvaged from the ruins of the house itself or scavenged from old wood piles around Abiquiú.[47] The walls are plastered in a rich beige adobe, as is the floor, creating a seamless envelope of earth. O'Keeffe eventually had adobe bancos (benches) built into the west wall and into the corner of the north and east walls, next to the fireplace. Into the seat of the banco on the west wall, she had embedded a glass box containing a rattlesnake skeleton that is strikingly arranged in a spiral on black cloth. In the 1970s, she installed another fireplace in the west wall near the garden window.

In contrast to the traditional elements of adobe architecture in the sitting room, the furnishings reflected O'Keeffe's modernist tastes. Photographs taken prior to 1960 show the room furnished with black wing chairs, black-and-white checked cushions on the bancos, red-cushioned hassocks, and African masks from Stieglitz's collection, which hung on the walls. As O'Keeffe

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[45]Brettell, unpublished manuscript, O'Keeffe Foundation Archives, n.p.

[46]Further research is required to determine the precise year in which O'Keeffe made changes to the sitting room interior. A 1960 photograph of the sitting room by Laura Gilpin shows the smaller windows on the south, while a 1964 photograph by Balthazar Korab shows the large glass panels (O'Keeffe Foundation Archives). The quote is from the taped interview with Soullière, March 25, 1981.

[47]Chabot, phone conversation with Burt, June 6, 1997, and O'Keeffe, taped interview with Soullière, March 25, 1981. Building material was in short supply in northern New Mexico in the mid- to late-1940s because the construction of Los Alamos, the top-secret site of the Manhattan Project, was taking place simultaneously 30 miles to the west.

grew older, she created a more minimal, perhaps even elemental, interior, in which fabrics in soft earth tones blended with the adobe surfaces. The few furnishings were limited to the mid-century modern designs of Eames, Saarinen, and Bartolucci and Waldheim. To these O'Keeffe added an Alexander Calder mobile that hung from the ceiling over the west fireplace, as well as one or two of her own paintings, although she changed those frequently. O'Keeffe's large *Yellow Horizon and Clouds IV* (1963; 48 x 83 in.) from the *Sky Above Clouds* series of the 1960s currently hangs on the east wall.

The dining room is similar to the sitting room in its rustic ceiling treatment and floor and wall finish, albeit the wall plaster is painted white. The only furnishings in the room are six captain's chairs and a dining-room table cleverly fashioned out of plywood panels. As in the studio, the panels are not attached to their supports; the supports consist of two pairs of hinged plywood boards upon which the panels sit. Above the table, O'Keeffe covered the bare bulb with an Akari paper lantern designed by the American sculptor Isamu Noguchi (1904–1988), who was a friend.

12) The Roofless Room: This large room probably once served as the main living quarters in the old Indian pueblo wing. By the time O'Keeffe saw it in the 1930s, part of one wall was gone and the roof had partially collapsed, although the vigas were intact. When O'Keeffe acquired the house, she visualized the room as it was without a roof to serve as an indoor-outdoor patio, covered with wire screen to keep out mosquitoes and flies.[48] Thus she retained the old vigas, but built no solid roof. The adobe walls are whitewashed and the floor is covered with loose gravel. On warmer winter days when the sun heated the walls of the Roofless Room, O'Keeffe would have meals there and often let her pair of Chow dogs out into the fresh air and sunshine. On a low table improvised out of cement blocks and a natural stone slab, O'Keeffe placed a casting in white epoxy of her sculpture *Abstraction* (original plaster version made in 1945; this casting made in the 1979/80).

13 and 14) The lower bedroom and bath: In the nineteenth-century floor plan, these two rooms in the old wing of the house had no door connecting them to the main section. Chabot and O'Keeffe elected to keep them that way, creating a second guest suite, which had more privacy than the east bedroom wing. Visiting friends often were assigned this bedroom and bath. The bedroom floor is adobe, and the bathroom one is concrete painted red. The bedroom has a viga-and-board ceiling darkened with applied mud and a large plate-glass window in the north wall. The bathroom contains a shower without walls, which has been installed against the curving south wall. These rooms also are not open to the public.

15) The Indian Room: A very old room in the compound, O'Keeffe chose to keep it as it was, except that she added adobe bancos along the east, west, and south walls.[49] Chabot installed a casement window in the west wall and sculpted the adobe jambs to admit more light. O'Keeffe's decorative touches include a collection of Indian baskets, pottery, and prehistoric artifacts that

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[48]Chabot to O'Keeffe, March 2, 1946, Beinecke Library, and O'Keeffe, taped interview with Soullière, March 25, 1981.

[49]O'Keeffe, taped interview with Soullière, March 25, 1981.

she placed on the long ledge of the fireplace and in the *nicho* above the fireplace. The ceiling, composed of wide planks milled in standard sizes (instead of hand-split) and laid over three vigas, may have been constructed in the Chávez era. Tacked to one of the vigas is a plank identical to those in the ceiling, upon which is written "Le teché hoy 5 de N.bre de 1865" ("It was roofed on November 5, 1865."). Because the Indian Room is the coolest one in the house, O'Keeffe frequently used it as a place for daytime meals during hot days. In the winter, she used it as a cold storage room for dried herbs and canned vegetables.

16) The kitchen: The kitchen interior imparts a less rustic aesthetic than do other rooms in the house. The ceiling consists of vigas covered with milled planks, a common treatment in the food preparation areas of adobe houses because the close fit of the boards prevents the dirt of the earthen roof from sifting down through the cracks.[50] The walls are brown adobe that have been whitewashed below a certain height to blend with the white surfaces of appliances and cabinets. Chabot installed a cork floor in 1948, but in the early 1970s O'Keeffe covered it with sheet-vinyl linoleum. Chabot also cleverly expanded on the concept of the adobe *nicho* by insetting white-enameled metal cabinets in recessed spaces of the south and east walls. Another ingenious device is the diagonal doorway that O'Keeffe instructed Chabot to cut through the adobe wall where the kitchen and dining room, diagonally contiguous, join at the corner. With the double, swinging panels of the door and the efficient access it allows between the two rooms, the concept seems modern. However, such corner doorways, according to Maria Chabot, are precedented in Indian pueblo architecture.[51] In addition to these features, the entire north wall is glass—consisting of a large picture window, French doors, and three single-pane casement windows. A sofa covered with a white cotton sheet sits against the south wall.

Reflecting O'Keeffe's practical nature, the appliances, all dating to about 1950, were purchased for their labor-saving features and streamlined design. They include a handsome, "ultra-modern" Chambers gas stove; a Kenmore mangle; and a Kitchenaid dishwasher.[52] The kitchen also contains a plywood table set on sawhorses and a sink and drain board that are built into a white-enameled, one-piece metal cabinet.

17, 18, and 19) The pantry, laundry room, and garage: These three rooms are strictly utilitarian. The pantry has the same ceiling and floor treatments as the kitchen. The ceiling consists of vigas covered with milled planks, and the floor, also originally cork, was later recovered with sheet-vinyl linoleum. The pantry shelving consists of wooden structures that are either attached to the walls or inset. The shelves hold a remarkable selection of O'Keeffe's kitchen appliances, cookware, and glass jars of herbs and spices dried from her garden. The contents of the pantry clearly communicate the artist's profound interest in proper nutrition and careful food preparation.

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[50]James, *HABS: The Georgia O'Keeffe Home and Studio*, p. 17.

[51]Chabot, telephone conversation with Burt, June 6, 1977.

[52]O'Keeffe saved many pamphlets and brochures about the various household gadgets appliances she purchased over the years, for example, the pamphlet "Introducing Chambers: The Finest and Most Beautiful Range," Chambers Corporation, Shelbyville, Indiana, 1949. O'Keeffe Foundation Archives.

The laundry room and the garage both have cement floors, essential to areas where constant exposure to moisture would dissolve the mud. The laundry room contains a large sink, a washing machine, two substantial freezers, and a hot water heater. The room is notable for its rustic ceiling treatment of old vigas and rough split-cedar *rajas*, which most likely date to the Chávez period. The bottom surface of the ceiling is blackened, supporting Chabot's theory that this room had been used previously as a kitchen.

23) The *plazuela*: The central patio is the strongest architectural feature of the house, and the part of the house that O'Keeffe found the most compelling: "You're in a square box; you see the sky over you, the ground beneath. In the patio there's a plot of sage, and the only other thing . . . is a well with a round top. It's wonderful at night—with the stars framed by the walls."[53] Chabot and O'Keeffe both were fascinated by the well, which prior to the rehabilitation was topped with "a very pretty well house"[54] that did not conform to O'Keeffe's more practical tastes. She promptly had the well house removed and replaced with the simple wooden cover that is still in place. Today, an O'Keeffe bronze sculpture adorns the well cover. The well supplied water to the house until the early 1950s when Abiquiú acquired a community water system.

The restricted number and types of physical elements in the patio suggest the influence of Japanese garden aesthetics. Around the perimeter of the patio, Chabot set into the pounded dirt floor a path of terra cotta paving tiles in a series of square modules. O'Keeffe planted wild mountain sage in the patio, pruning the unusually large bushes into shapes that invoke the sculpted pine trees of a Japanese stroll garden.

The east wall of the patio opens to the double-wide *zaguán* that was the historic entrance to the compound. Here, the ceiling appears once again to be old, probably dating to the nineteenth century. The vigas are covered with wide planks, one of which is inscribed with "Le teché hoy 27 de octubre 1861" ("It was roofed on October 27, 1861."). Chabot covered the mud floor in the *zaguán* with the same type of terra cotta pavers as are in the patio and library, and she built a banco on the north wall. O'Keeffe used the banco to display another collection of rocks and fossils, above which she hung an elk's skull with a magnificent pair of antlers.

Moving to the immediate surroundings of the house and studio, the environment within the adobe wall consists of contrasting zones of vegetation and use. The large garden on the south and southwest sides of the main house enabled O'Keeffe to grow her own produce in the high desert. Although General Chávez historically has received credit for first establishing the garden, Chabot restored it during the 1946–1949 rehabilitation by leveling the soil, hauling in tons of manure, and landscaping it initially with hundreds of trees and plants not indigenous to the area. She also retained and rebuilt the stone-lined *acéquias* that irrigate the garden. Her design for the garden consisted of three terraces that were later separated by raised walkways made of stone and cement. The upper terrace to the south contained fruit trees, while the lower two terraces were cultivated to grow a large selection of vegetables, herbs, and flowers, the latter of which O'Keeffe often painted. For thirty years, O'Keeffe's gardener, Estiben Suazo, maintained the

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[53]O'Keeffe in Kuh, *The Artist's Voice*, p. 190.

[54]O'Keeffe, *Georgia O'Keeffe*, commentary to plate 82.

production of fresh, organically grown fruits and vegetables that provided the mainstay of the artist's diet. Today, the trees in the upper terrace still bear fruit of various kinds. However, the lower two terraces over the years since O'Keeffe's death have filled with grass as the result of seeds washing in through the irrigation ditches. In the lowest terrace, the Foundation still maintains a small plot of vegetables.

On the west side of the compound, zones meet in a clear demarcation where the cultivated gives way to the uncultivated, a natural desert terrain of various types of cactus. The uncultivated area extends to the north side of the studio building. Within this uncultivated, desert zone, directly in front of the kitchen and to the west of the studio is a sort of wild garden (no. 26) confined within an adobe wall on the west and a stone wall on the north. In this walled area, four heroically sized, weathered posts mark the remains of a hay-drying rack, now covered over with lace vine. To the east of this zone, between the garage and the studio building is the gravel-covered courtyard (no. 22) that O'Keeffe converted from a corral to a motor court. The entrance to the motor court is through a large gate in the adobe wall connecting the studio building with the house. Outside this gate, on the east side of the compound, there is a gravel-covered parking area. Visitors enter the parking area from the south through a gate with a cattle guard.

Gravel was added to the courtyard in the early 1980s to eliminate the problem of walking through mud between the studio and the house, which O'Keeffe encountered whenever it rained. However, during the most of O'Keeffe's period of occupancy, the surface of the courtyard consisted of packed mud, which O'Keeffe's gardener swept regularly. Similarly, O'Keeffe brought in gravel for the parking area, although this occurred much earlier, perhaps as early as the 1960s. In both the courtyard and the parking area, the gravel is a particular size and color (in the latter case, a reddish-brown that blends in with the color of the stucco exterior) and must be hauled to Abiquiú from Santa Fe.[55]

[55]Agapita Judy Lopez, assistant director, Georgia O'Keeffe Foundation, telephone conversation with Sarah Burt, January 9, 1998.

8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:
Nationally: X Statewide:__ Locally:__

Applicable National Register Criteria:	A__ B X C__ D__
Criteria Considerations (Exceptions):	A__ B__ C__ D__ E__ F__ G X
NHL Criteria:	2
NHL Criteria Exception:	8
NHL Theme(s):	Expressing Cultural Values: Visual and Performing Arts
Areas of Significance:	Art
Period(s) of Significance:	1945–1949
Significant Dates:	1946–1949
Significant Person(s):	Georgia Totto O'Keeffe,
Cultural Affiliation:	N/A
Architect/Builder:	Georgia O'Keeffe Maria Chabot
Historic Context:	XXIV. Painting and Sculpture J. World War II to the Present, 1939–1986 1. American Early Modernism 2. Modernism in New Mexico

State Significance of Property, and Justify Criteria, Criteria Considerations, and Areas and Periods of Significance Noted Above.

The home and studio of the artist Georgia O'Keeffe in Abiquiú, New Mexico, is one of the most important artistic sites in the southwestern United States. The buildings, their immediate surroundings, and the views they command of the magnificent landscape that inspired many of O'Keeffe's best-known paintings all combine to provide insight into the vision and process of a major figure in twentieth-century American art.

This insight becomes particularly useful for evaluating the work of an artist whose life and persona have taken on mythic proportions within our national culture. O'Keeffe has become, according to critic Mark Stevens, "an iconic figure, a woman who represents an essential version of the American dream."[56] She embodied the dream in the two great pilgrimages that defined her life, the first one to New York City in 1918 and the second one to the West in 1929. These two destinations themselves have symbolic importance in the national psyche—they are the "essential, yet contrary, destinations of the questing American spirit."[57]

In the first pilgrimage, she breached the masculine preserve of art at a time when few women could gain entrée and seemed effortlessly to take her place among the male artists of the Stieglitz circle. In the second, she deliberately withdrew from New York, the nation's intellectual and artistic center, to make the quintessentially American journey West—responding to the call of the majestic, heroic landscape that has beckoned pioneers throughout American history. She made the journey by herself, a remarkable step in an era when women rarely conceived such a notion, let alone acted upon it. In the choice to pursue her life's work solitarily, apart from husband and marriage, "she gave the feminine a powerful scale."[58]

The mythic quality ascribed to O'Keeffe has often obscured the precise nature of her contribution to the history of American art. A visit to the painter's home and studio—the place she created and refined over a thirty-five-year period as a space for living and working—helps to clarify the contribution and affords a personalized framework for better grasping and appreciating the cultural values embodied in her art. O'Keeffe's house in Abiquiú, wrote art critic Michael Kimmelman, "is probably [her] best late work, in fact, her fullest statement about art and life."[59]

From the first public exhibition of Georgia O'Keeffe's art in New York City in 1916 to the establishment of a museum dedicated exclusively to her work some eighty years later in Santa Fe, New Mexico, she has remained an American original, resisting categorization. "Remarkably unaffected by the fluctuations of artistic trends," wrote art historian Lisa Mintz Messinger,

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[56] Mark Stevens, "Introduction: Georgia O'Keeffe and the American Dream," *The Georgia O'Keeffe Museum,* edited by Peter H. Hassrick (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1997), p. 12.

[57] Ibid., p. 14.

[58] Ibid., p. 13.

[59] Michael Kimmelman, "An Artist's Library, Seen as a Self-Portrait," *The New York Times*, January 9, 1998, p. B33.

"O'Keeffe created her own highly individual style of painting, which synthesized the formal language of modern European abstraction and the subjects of American pictorialism."[60] Her images of flowers, fruit, barns, skyscrapers, trees, bones, the Texas plains, and the high desert of New Mexico form a cohesive body of work, consisting of a limited number of themes that she worked and reworked with an increasing mastery over the course of her long career.

O'Keeffe was born on November 15, 1887, in Sun Prairie, Wisconsin, the second child in a family of two sons and five daughters. Raised on a dairy farm, she developed an affinity for the forms of nature, as would a farm child who is exposed daily to the rhythms and cycles of the seasons.[61] After she turned fifteen, her life became a peripatetic one: she spent her teen years in Virginia and her early adulthood in Chicago, South Carolina, New York City, and western Texas. Despite her many moves and changing circumstances, she remained dedicated to one goal. From an early age, she knew she wanted to be an artist, proclaiming her decision to a playmate in the eighth grade. "I don't really know where I got my artist idea. . . . I only know that by that time it was definitely settled in my mind," she later wrote.[62]

However, at one critical point in her life, O'Keeffe wavered from her path. After studying at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago in 1905 and the Art Students League in New York City in 1907, she lost interest in painting, abandoning it in 1908 to pursue a career in commercial art in Chicago. Her enthusiasm for painting was rekindled four years later, in the fall of 1912, when her sisters persuaded her to attend an art course taught by Alon Bement at the University of Virginia. Bemont was a disciple of Arthur Wesley Dow, an innovative educator who was head of the art department of Columbia University Teachers College in New York. Dow had developed a revolutionary approach to teaching and creating art. Basing his approach on Japanese design principles, Dow visualized composition not as the projection on canvas of objects accurately represented, but as the harmonious interrelationship of forms that together expressed an idea, a mood, or a state of mind.[63] Extending aesthetics into the realm of daily living, Dow believed that his theory of composition could be applied to every human activity, thus providing a path to integration and harmony. "Dow's teaching had been based on the idea that the same principles applied no matter what sort of work you were doing—pottery, making wallets, anything. He

thought everybody had to use these principles in everything he did," O'Keeffe explained in

[60]Lisa Mintz Messenger, *Georgia O'Keeffe* (London: Thames and Hudson, Ltd., 1989), p. 7.

[61]Charles C. Eldredge, *Georgia O'Keeffe: American and Modern,* exh. cat. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), p. 192.

[62]Georgia O'Keeffe, *Georgia O'Keeffe* (New York: Penguin Books, 1988, reprint ed.),n.p.

[63]Frederick C. Moffatt, *Arthur Wesley Dow (1857–1922)*, exh. cat. (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1977), p. 63.

1974.[64]

The impact of Dow's ideas on O'Keeffe was profound, affecting the way she created art and the way she lived her life. She took classes from Dow at Columbia University Teachers College in the academic year 1914–1915 and again in the spring of 1916. "This man had one dominating idea," she told an interviewer in 1962, "to fill a space in a beautiful way—and that interested me."[65] O'Keeffe incorporated Dow's idea that all physical choices should be aesthetic ones into her own curriculum at the Amarillo High School in Texas, where she taught art classes from 1912 to 1914, and at West Texas State Normal College in Canyon, where she was head of the art department from 1916 to 1918. "I liked to convey to [the students] that art is important in everyday life. I wanted them to learn the principle: that when you buy a pair of shoes or place a window in the front of a house or address a letter or comb your hair, consider it carefully, so that it looks well," she said.[66]

Some thirty years passed before O'Keeffe was able to apply this concept in a rigorous personal way. The opportunity came in 1945, when she acquired the house in Abiquiú—the first living and working space over which she had total control.

In her work as a painter, however, Dow's theory affected the development of O'Keeffe's art almost immediately after her first class with him in 1914. "By this time I had a technique for handling oil and water color easily; Dow gave me something to do with it," she said.[67] Inspired by his ideas, she abandoned her formal training in 1915 and embarked on a remarkable series of abstractions drawn in charcoal. These works came to the attention of the prominent photographer and New York gallery owner Alfred Stieglitz early in 1916. Later that year, Stieglitz showed the charcoals at his Little Galleries of the Photo Secession at 291 Fifth Avenue (commonly referred to as the gallery 291), where he featured the work of many avant-garde European and American artists of the day, sometimes for the first time anywhere in the world. At 291 in the spring of 1917, he held O'Keeffe's first solo exhibition, an amazing achievement for a young teacher from Texas, whose one-person show debuted at the premiere modernist gallery of the period.

In 1918, with an offer of financial support from Stiegltiz, O'Keeffe left her teaching job in Canyon, Texas, and moved to New York City to pursue a full-time career as a painter. Stieglitz vigorously promoted her art and also began to photograph her, producing over the course of twenty years a composite portrait consisting of more than three hundred images. The two began living together soon after O'Keeffe arrived, and in 1924, they were married.

Through her professional and personal association with Stieglitz, O'Keeffe found herself in the midst of one of the most important circles of American early modernists, including the painters

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[64]O'Keeffe quoted by Calvin Tomkins in "The Rose in the Eye Looked Pretty Fine," *The New Yorker*, 50 (March 4, 1974), p. 50.

[65]O'Keeffe interviewed in Kuh, *The Artist's Voice,* p. 190.

[66]Roxana Robinson, *Georgia O'Keeffe,* p. 90.

[67]O'Keeffe in Kuh, *The Artist's Voice*, p. 190.

John Marin, Marsden Hartley, Arthur Dove, and Charles Demuth. Their discussions about the revolutionary achievements of European modernism were stimulating to the newcomer O'Keeffe, encouraging her growth as a painter. However, the members of the Stieglitz circle were concerned not just with integrating into their own work the abstract visual language and mystical overtones promulgated by avant-garde European artists such as Wassily Kandinsky. Most importantly, they wanted to adapt these ideas to the creation of a distinctly *American* body of work. To Stieglitz and his colleagues, O'Keeffe's art embodied an innately American quality, undiluted by foreign influence.[68] Taking note of O'Keeffe's inborn sensibility, sculptor Constantin Brancusi observed, "There is no imitation of Europe here; it is a force—a liberating free force."[69]

During the period from 1918 to the late 1920s, O'Keeffe produced many of her signature paintings: the lyrical, emotionally charged abstractions and the sensual flower close-ups, both of which invited erotic interpretations that persisted throughout her career despite her objections to the contrary; her visionary pictures of Manhattan skyscrapers and East River panoramas, which continue to stand as among the preeminent images of the city; and the luscious renderings of fruit, leaves, and trees often painted during summer visits to the Stieglitz family vacation home at Lake George, New York. This range of subjects related in part to the seasonal routine of the life she shared with Stieglitz, who insisted on maintaining an annual pattern of spending the winter months in Manhattan and the summer months at Lake George, often surrounded by the members of the Stieglitz clan.

By the late 1920s, O'Keeffe had become weary of the Manhattan-Lake George orbit prescribed by Stieglitz, and marital conflicts and professional pressures had taken their toll on her. She began to look for new sources of artistic inspiration and emotional support. An extended trip to New Mexico from April to August 1929 provided the inspiration for which she had been searching.

Arriving in Santa Fe (which she had visited for the first time in 1917), O'Keeffe soon ended up in Taos as a guest of Mabel Dodge Luhan, the transplanted New York socialite and hostess extraordinaire. At Luhan's house, O'Keeffe met a number of people who became lifelong friends, among them the journalist Willard "Spud" Johnson, the curator Daniel Catton Rich, and the photographer Ansel Adams. Mostly, however, she concentrated on exploring and painting the country around Taos. That summer she wrote New York critic Henry McBride, "You know I never feel at home in the East like I do out here—and finally feeling in the right place again—I feel like myself . . . . I have the most beautiful adobe studio—never had such a nice place all to

myself—Out the very large window to a rich green alfalfa field—then the sage brush and

[68] Lisa Mintz Messinger, "Georgia O'Keeffe: Painting Her Life," *The Georgia O'Keeffe Museum*, p. 35.

[69] Brancusi quoted in Tomkins, "The Rose in the Eye," p. 56.

beyond—a most perfect mountain—it makes me feel like flying. . . ."[70]

The high desert of New Mexico, with its surprising geological formations, vivid colors, and intense light, gave O'Keeffe the visual sources that revitalized her creative spirit. As art historian Jack Cowart characterized it: "The sky, the vastness, the sounds, . . . canyons, rocks, and bleached bones struck her as authentic and essential to her life as well as to her art. . . . In the Southwest she found primal mystery . . . ."[71] In a letter written at Lake George in October 1933, she urged the artist Russell Vernon Hunter to see New Mexico as she did: "Try to paint your world as tho you are the first man looking at it—The wind and the heat—and the cold—The dust—and the vast starlit night. . . . When the spring comes I think I must go back to it—I sometimes wish I had never seen it—The pull is so strong—So give my greetings to the sky."[72]

Succumbing to the pull over the next twenty years, O'Keeffe established her own seasonal circuit between New Mexico and New York, a routine separate from that of Stieglitz's. She sometimes spent as many as six months a year in New Mexico, returning to Stieglitz and New York in time to exhibit her latest paintings during the winter exhibition season.

O'Keeffe was neither the first nor the only artist in the Stieglitz circle to respond to the lure of New Mexico: Marsden Hartley had gone there in 1918 and John Marin in 1929—both men, like so many others, the guests of Mabel Luhan in Taos. Along with O'Keeffe, they, in effect, participated in a migration of modernist painters to the region during the 1920s and 1930s. The group included Raymond Jonson, Stuart Davis, Randall Davey, and Andrew Dasburg, all of whom were attracted by what D. H. Lawrence called the "spirit of place."[73] The distinctive character of the land and the separateness of its multilayered culture challenged them to try to pinpoint the essence of "the Great American Mystery—the National Rip Van Winkle—the United States which is *not* the United States."[74] More than most of the artists in the group, O'Keeffe succeeded in establishing a relationship between herself and the landscape "so uniquely

personal and intimate that her work there became a consummate expression of them both, to the

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[70]O'Keeffe to McBride, summer 1929, reprinted in Jack Cowart, Juan Hamilton, and Sarah Greenough, *Georgia O'Keeffe: Art and Letters*, exh. cat. (Washington, D.C.: National Gallery of Art, 1987), pp. 189–90 (letter no. 44).

[71]Cowart,"Georgia O'Keeffe: Art and Artist," *Art and Letters*, p. 5.

[72]O'Keeffe to Hunter, October 21, 1933, reprinted in ibid., p. 214 (letter no. 65).

[73]Charles C. Eldredge, "Beyond the Picturesque," in Eldredge, Julie Schimmel, and William H. Truettner, *Art in New Mexico, 1900–1945: Paths to Taos and Santa Fe*, exh. cat. (Washington, D.C.: National Museum of American Art, 1986), p. 13. Lawrence himself was a guest of Luhan's in 1922–23 and 1924–25. The migration of modernist painters into the state, as Eldredge has observed (p. 14), constituted the second wave of artists to arrive in New Mexico. The first wave began in the late nineteenth century and led to the founding of the Taos Society of Artists (1915–1927), which included generally more conservative painters such as Joseph Henry Sharp, Ernest L. Blumenschein, Bert Geer Phillips, E. Irving Couse, and Victor Higgins.

[74]Charles F. Lummis from *The Land of Poco Tiempo* (1893) is quoted in Eldredge, ibid.

point that it changed the American public's perceptions of the Southwest."[75]

Among the most original, and enigmatic, of these desert motifs were O'Keeffe's images of animal bones, a theme she began to paint in 1930. By nature a gatherer of such souvenirs as rocks, shells, and flowers, O'Keeffe found that in the desert "there was nothing to see in the land in the way of a flower. There were just dry white bones. So I picked them up."[76]

Throughout the decades of the 1930s, she worked on a variety of still-life compositions featuring animal skulls. In the 1940s, the bone series culminated with O'Keeffe's monumental images of animal pelvises, twelve pictures of which she painted between 1943 and 1945. At first, she placed the pelvises in landscape settings. Subsequently, she paired the images down to the pelvises alone, focusing on the voids of the sockets, through which she sometimes provided a glimpse of the moon, sometimes only sky. For O'Keeffe, these images were her own private "symbols of the desert,"[77] but in time, they became cultural symbols of the American Southwest.

Despite the uniqueness of the bone imagery, the New Mexican landscape remained O'Keeffe's most enduring theme. It was not until in 1934, however, after she had made several trips to New Mexico, that O'Keeffe discovered the Red Rock landscape north of Abiquiú, the southwestern subject with which she would be most identified. That summer, a friend told her about the striking terrain around Ghost Ranch, a dude ranch located 60 miles west of Taos in the Chama River Valley, not far from Abiquiú. Her first sight of the eroded and brilliantly colored cliffs at Ghost Ranch convinced her that, as she later said, "this is my world up here."[78] She immediately began to explore the motifs that she would paint again and again: the high pink and yellow cliffs at Ghost Ranch; the flat-topped blue mountain called the Cerro Pedernal; the wrinkled red hills around Abiquiú; and the strange volcanic formations at the nearby White Place.

In subsequent years, she returned to Ghost Ranch, where, beginning in 1937, she rented the small house of Arthur Pack, the owner of the ranch. Pack built the U-shaped, flat-roofed adobe for his family in 1933. When O'Keeffe bought the house from Pack seven years later, she enlarged windows and knocked out a wall to create a studio. Furnishings remained sparse, and as decoration, O'Keeffe collected animal skulls, bones, and rocks during her daily walks. For the most part, however, the interior of O'Keeffe's house at Ghost Ranch was secondary to its exterior views—the portale on the south faced O'Keeffe's favorite mountain, the Cerro Pedernal, and windows on the north faced the artist's beloved pink and yellow cliffs. "I've done much less

[than at the Abiquiú house] to make it mine," she said in 1968. "All my association with it is a

[75] *Workshop Findings and Recommendations: Painting and Sculpture Theme Study Workshop* (Washington, D.C.: United States Department of the Interior/National Park Service, 1993), p. 24.

[76] O'Keeffe quoted in Dorothy Seiberling, "Horizons of a Pioneer," *Life*, 64, no. 9 (March 1, 1968), p. 42.

[77] O'Keeffe quoted in Seiberling, "Horizons of a Pioneer," p. 42.

[78] O'Keeffe, taped interview with Soullière, March 25, 1981.

kind of freedom."[79]

For this reason, as O'Keeffe stated frequently over the years, she felt renewed by her summer and fall stays at the Ghost Ranch house. However, the house was not practical as a year-round residence.[80] It had neither running water nor a readily available source of fresh fruits and vegetables, and it was extremely isolated, especially in the winter. There was no telephone or telegraph. As early as the mid-1930s, O'Keeffe had been interested in the property in Abiquiú as the location that best afforded her not only privacy and inspiration for painting, but also self-sufficiency. As Alfred Stieglitz's health declined in the 1930s and it became clear that she would leave New York, O'Keeffe focused on the Abiquiú house as her permanent destination.

When she finally moved to Abiquiú in 1949, she was sixty-two years old and a major figure in American art. She had brought five decades of aesthetic experience to bear on the rehabilitation and design of the first and only full-time residence that she owned. The house in Abqiuiú "became the fulfillment of a vision that she had already had. . . . It conformed to an idea of how she wanted to live. . . ."[81] Here, the application of Dow's principles to all facets of life could be made. Thus she orchestrated the aspects of her life "in a simple and clear way, the way she liked a room to look, the way she liked to dress. It was unpretentious and, to some, austere," wrote her assistant Juan Hamilton.[82] "Her genius was a oneness with herself. . . . There was a connection between her internal and external world that was full of truth."[83]

The power of that truth is clear to the visitor. O'Keeffe's Abiquiú residence is the most conscious and complete expression of her philosophy of "filling a space in a beautiful way." In rooms handcrafted out of mud and adorned with the artist's treasured rocks and bones, art and life successfully became integrated. Every element conforms to O'Keeffe's sense of color, design, and the harmonious relationship of one object to another and of the house to the land. The residence in Abiquiú, more than any other place O'Keeffe occupied, exemplifies her sensibility by being at one with the art she created during the last thirty-five years of her life.

Other places are associated with O'Keeffe through the art she produced while living in them. These include the room she and Stieglitz occupied on the thirtieth floor of the Shelton Hotel in New York from 1925 to 1936; the penthouse apartment the couple rented on East 54th Street in New York from 1936 to 1949; the Stieglitz family summer home at Lake George; and O'Keeffe's house at Ghost Ranch, where she spent most summers and falls from 1937 to 1984. Some of these residences no longer exist (such as the Stieglitz summer home), or they have been substantially altered since the artist's occupancy so that they cannot convey a meaningful

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[79]O'Keeffe quoted in Seiberling, "Horizons of a Pioneer," p. 45.

[80]"It's hard to live at the ranch," she told Seiberling in "Horizons of a Pioneer" (p. 45). "When I first came here, I had to go 70 miles on a dirt road to get supplies. Nobody would go by for two weeks. . . . But I got tired of canned vegetables so now I grow everything I need for the year in Abiquiu."

[81]Kimmelman, "An Artist's Library," p. B33.

[82]Hamilton, "In O'Keeffe's World," in Cowart, Hamilton, and Greenough, *Art and Letters*, p. 8.

[83]Ibid., p. 11.

association with O'Keeffe. The latter is the case with the artist's New York City residences and, to a large extent, with her Ghost Ranch house. Although the setting of the Ghost Ranch house beneath O'Keeffe's favorite pink and yellow cliffs still conveys her intimate relationship with the landscape, the interiors of the house lack sufficient integrity to express the essence of her contribution to American culture.

The Abiquiú residence, however, remains remarkably intact and able to convey three important aspects of O'Keeffe's contribution: 1) the personal values she expressed in the way she lived her life; 2) the aesthetic values she communicated in her art through the manipulation of form, color, and themes taken from the surrounding environment; 3) the spiritual values she was able to convey by transforming symbols of nature into universal motifs.

With their simple and practical furnishings, elemental colors, and spectacular views out the huge picture windows, the interiors at Abiquiú reveal the fierce and disciplined focus of an artist profoundly dedicated to her work. There is nothing extraneous in these spaces, all elements work together to support the artist's vision. "I like to have things as sparse as possible," she once said. "If you have an empty wall, you can think on it better. I like a space to think in. . . ."[84]

Certain spaces of the house and studio in particular impart the contemplative quality of this period in O'Keeffe's life. In the sitting room (no. 10), the brown adobe surfaces of the walls glow with the soft light that filters in from the skylights and large window opening onto the garden. "I used to live almost in this room," she said in 1981, describing how she would sit by the fireplace and look out the big window.[85] She also liked to read in the sitting room, where she initially kept books before moving them all to the book room (no. 8),[86] and to listen to music, an activity she avidly pursued throughout her life, having been a student of both piano and violin in her youth.[87] Evidence of her great love of music exists in the presence of a fine stereo component system that she chose only after careful research in the 1960s.[88]

O'Keeffe's bedroom (no. 2) evokes contemplation as well, and also reductivity. The elements of the room are pared down to essentials: a bed, a table, a reading lamp. Rocks, shells, and fossils are carefully arranged on an adobe ledge. Simple white cotton curtains cover the enormous picture windows. When the curtains are closed, the focal points in the room become the elegant adobe hood of the corner fireplace and the bronze hand embedded in the wall beside it. When the curtains are open, the focal point becomes the panoramic sweep of the Chama River Valley and the Abiquiú Mesa, dramatically underscoring for the visitor the uniquely personal relationship between O'Keeffe and the landscape.

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[84]O'Keeffe quoted in Tomkins, "The Rose in the Eye," p. 50.

[85]O'Keeffe, taped interview with Soullière, March 25, 1981.

[86]Ibid.

[87]Robinson, *Georgia O'Keeffe*, p. 44.

[88]O'Keeffe Foundation Archives.

O'Keeffe produced her last three important painting series during her years in Abiquiú: the patio pictures, the images of the winding road out her bedroom window, and the *Sky Above Clouds* series, her impressions of what the sky looks like from an airplane. In two of the three series, her sources were limited to the confines of the house and its surroundings. The qualities of reduction and focus so evident in the details of the residence itself are discernible in the images O'Keeffe created by closely observing her immediate environment. In both of these late series, she started with depictions that were fairly realistic and, as she reworked each theme, she pared the compositions down to two or three essential elements. "I work with an idea for a long time," O'Keeffe said. "It's like getting acquainted with a person, and I don't get acquainted easily. . . . Sometimes I start in a very realistic fashion, and as I go on from one painting to another of the same thing, it becomes simplified till it can be nothing but abstract."[89]

O'Keeffe's reductive process is apparent in the thirty patio pictures she painted between 1946 and 1960, which document her profound fascination with the Abiquiú patio wall and its door (figure 1). Doors had always been featured in O'Keeffe's work, but in these paintings, they became the central motif of the compositions. In the earliest pictures of the series, O'Keeffe presented the patio wall and door in a straightforward, representational way: the architectural context is clear from the descriptive elements O'Keeffe included, such as sky, ground, the clay paving tiles of the courtyard, and sometimes the irregular line of the top of the parapet. In later works, O'Keeffe eliminated details until the context is not identifiable. This is true of a 1954 work misleadingly titled *My Last Door*, an image that is two-dimensional, a totally abstract arrangement consisting of a flat shape isolated against a blank rectangle. The mood of such late works is tranquil and meditative, not emotionally charged, as O'Keeffe's earlier images tended to be, perhaps echoing, as one art historian wrote, "the mood of the artist as she faced life in New Mexico after Stieglitz's death."[90]

Similarly, the series of images O'Keeffe created by observing the view out her bedroom window to the east is marked by a progressive elimination of elements. The earliest paintings, produced in 1952, include the details of roadside trees and of the vegetation and topography of the Abiquiú Mesa (figure 2). However, in one of the last pictures of the series, *The Winter Road I* (1963, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.), O'Keeffe radically limited the elements to only the calligraphic sweep of the road against the white background of snow, endowing the image with "a mysterious, evocative presence," one that "invites an attitude of mystical contemplation."[91] O'Keeffe described her fascination with the view in her 1976 book: "Two walls of my room in the Abiquiu house are glass and from one window I see the road toward Espanola and the world. The road fascinates me with its ups and downs and finally its wide sweep as it speeds toward the wall of my hilltop to go past me. . . . I began drawing and painting it as a new shape. The trees and mesa beside it were unimportant for that painting—it was just the road."[92]

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[89]O'Keeffe quoted in *Christie's New York*, sale no. 8546, December 4, 1996, p. 298.

[90]Messinger, "Painting Her Life," p. 44.

[91]Barbara Rose, *American Painting: The Twentieth Century* (Geneva: Editions d'Art Albert Skira, S.A., new edition 1989; originally published 1969), p. 34.

[92]O'Keeffe in *Georgia O'Keeffe*, commentary to plate 102.

O'Keeffe's focus during the last significant decades of her painting career on quiet evocations of her home environment can be compared to the great meditative studies of the sea that Winslow Homer produced in the 1890s and early 1900s, at the end of his life. Just as Homer's depictions of the elemental forces of nature are inextricably linked to his home and studio at Prout's Neck, Maine (a National Historic Landmark in private ownership), O'Keeffe's mysterious contemplations of her patio wall and its door are identified solely with her house in Abiquiú. For both artists in the last, more meditative phases of their lives, home and the artistic process are bound together. O'Keeffe described the connection in 1962:

> One works because I suppose it is the most interesting thing one knows to do. The days one works are the best days. On the other days one is hurrying through the other things one imagines one has to do to keep one's life going. You get the garden planted. You get the roof fixed. You take the dog to the vet. You spend a day with a friend. You learn to make a new kind of bread. . . . You may even enjoy doing such things. You think they have to be done. . . . But always you are hurrying through these things with a certain amount of aggravation so that you can get at the paintings again because that is the high spot—in a way it is what you do all the other things for. . . . The painting is like a thread that runs through all the reasons for all the other things that make one's life.[93]

[93]O'Keeffe quoted in Laurie Lisle, *Portrait of an Artist: A Biography of Georgia O'Keeffe* (New York: Washington Square Books, 1997; originally published in 1980), p. 398.

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The author wishes to thank Catherine Colby, Historical Architect, Southwest Regional Office for her assistance and advice. Also, Mary Ann Anders, Dorothy Victor, and Phil Shelley of the New Mexico State Historic Preservation Office.

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: # (not recorded)
__ Recorded by Historic American Engineering Record: #

Primary Location of Additional Data:

__ State Historic Preservation Office
__ Other State Agency
__ Federal Agency
__ Local Government
__ University
X Other (Specify Repository): Alfred Stieglitz-Georgia O'Keeffe Archive, Beinecke Library, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut; Archives of the Georgia O'Keeffe Foundation, Abiquiú, New Mexico; Archives of the National Park Service, Santa Fe, New Mexico

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Acreage of Property: 4 acres

UTM References:	Zone	Easting	Northing
	13	381620	4007620

Verbal Boundary Description:

The boundaries of the property are indicated on the attached map entitled "Survey of Georgia O'Keeffe Home and Studio."

Boundary Justification:

The boundary includes 2.9 acres of land and two buildings purchased in 1945 by Georgia O'Keeffe and occupied by her until 1984. O'Keeffe added another acre of arroyo land, which she considered part of the natural setting.

11. FORM PREPARED BY

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NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS SURVEY
July 1, 1998