

# CREATING THE MUSEUM OF NEW MEXICO

BY DAVID ROHR

1909 - 2009



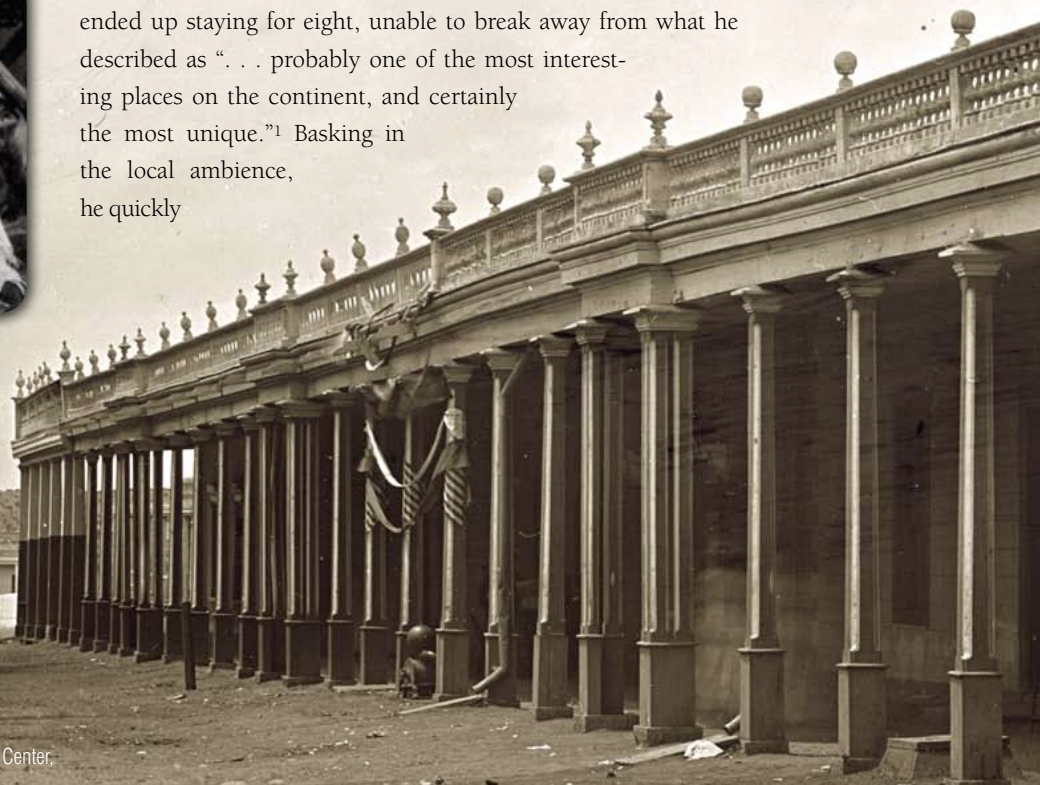
Just after dark in late November 1884, a solitary figure trudged towards the dim lights at the northern outskirts of Santa Fe. Charles Fletcher Lummis was tired, parched, and relieved finally to arrive in the old capital, as he had walked nearly forty miles that day without food or water. Anyone chancing to observe his unceremonious nocturnal entry onto the Plaza might have thought him to be a common tramp, but Lummis was far from anonymous. The twenty-five-year-old was already a minor celebrity known to thousands of newspaper readers as the audacious young journalist who had left Cincinnati ten weeks earlier to undertake a transcontinental walk to Los Angeles. Weekly installments of his travelogue were published in the *Chillicothe Leader* and other papers as he made his way West to begin a new job reporting for the *Los Angeles Times*. He could have taken the train, but Lummis chose to walk as a dramatic gesture designed to bolster his stature as a journalist and see the West firsthand.

Lummis had planned to remain in Santa Fe for only two days but ended up staying for eight, unable to break away from what he described as “. . . probably one of the most interesting places on the continent, and certainly the most unique.”<sup>1</sup> Basking in the local ambience, he quickly

**ABOVE:** Charles F. Lummis as he appeared in 1884, shortly after his journey through Santa Fe.

*Portrait of Charles F. Lummis on His Tramp, 1884.*

Gift of Charles F. Lummis, courtesy of the Autry National Center, Southwest Museum, Los Angeles. Photo #P.32528.



fell in love with the city's exotic mystique. Although there were no museums in New Mexico at the time, the young journalist was invited to view a private collection of local antiquities. “. . . I reveled in a wonderful collection of aboriginal pottery and stone and bone implements,” Lummis enthusiastically reported in his next dispatch, adding that the collection would “make your eyes pop out.”<sup>2</sup>

He also commented effusively about the history, people, architecture, and climate of the old capital city but noted that Santa Fe was “on the downgrade,” in the midst of an economic slump that he did not believe could be easily resolved. After a week of blissful immersion in the local culture, Lummis hesitantly resumed his journey, heading south towards the Cerrillos mines with this parting comment: “I am proud to say that I finally did elope from Santa Fe—proud because it took a great deal of nerve. It was as hard as breaking away from your best girl at 11:45 p.m., when she puts her soft arms around your neck and says: ‘Oh, George, it is *real* early yet. Please don’t go.’”<sup>3</sup>

“**A Place Like No Other**,” a series inspired by the creation of the New Mexico History Museum, is devoted to exploring New Mexico history through new research and recent insights of curators, artists, collections managers, educators, historians, archaeologists, anthropologists, and ethnohistorians—work that will inspire lines of inquiry and exhibitions for years to come.

In this article, author David Rohr traces the development of the Museum of New Mexico through events that shaped an enduring museum system and the personalities that collaborated and at times clashed.

Frances Levine, Ph.D.  
Director, Palace of the Governors/  
New Mexico History Museum



**BACKGROUND:** Palace of the Governors as it appeared in the pre-museum era when Lummis stepped onto the Plaza in 1884. Ben Wittick, Old Palace, Santa Fe, New Mexico, 1880. Courtesy of Edward Ranney, Photo Archives, Palace of the Governors (MNNM/DCA), Neg. No. 15376.

Lummis was right about Santa Fe’s economic outlook—the city had hit upon hard times. Wagon trade on the Santa Fe Trail had ended in 1880 with the coming of the railroad to New Mexico. Making matters worse, the rails had bypassed Santa Fe entirely, routing south, and the nearest station was fifteen miles away. As the population was declining, the future of the capital city was in serious doubt. Not yet a state and searching for its own national identity, New Mexico was viewed by outsiders as an obscure, backward, and uncultured territory. This unflattering perception was one of several factors that had delayed statehood for so many years and kept local leaders on the lookout for new remedies to Santa Fe’s economic malaise.

Despite the downturn, a few positive signs of change were in the air. The railroad was already bringing the first wave of tourists and health seekers to Santa Fe and actively promoting the Southwest as a desirable destination. Archaeologist Adolph Bandelier had recently begun his innovative studies of nearby Frijoles Canyon (now Bandelier National Monument) and other sites of antiquity in New Mexico. In September 1885 the New Mexico Historical Society opened the first museum in the territory, featuring an eclectic collection of Spanish colonial and Native American objects in the east rooms of the Palace of the Governors. Over the next decade, Lummis himself wrote several books that did much to popularize New Mexico and the Southwest in the public eye. These developments alone were not enough to lessen Santa Fe’s economic doldrums, but in time each would contribute to renewed prosperity. As the twentieth century began, archaeology proved to be the catalyst that accelerated a fantastic cultural revitalization.

## Origins

By 1906 Bandelier’s work on the Pajarito Plateau and other sites had convinced some that New Mexico was destined to flourish as a base for professional archaeological exploration and education. A number of individuals in and outside of New Mexico began to plan in this direction, none so influential as a young educator from the Midwest named Edgar Lee Hewett. Ambitious, egotistical, yet intensely passionate about archaeology, Hewett would become the leading voice in promoting culture in New Mexico over the next forty years.

Hewett was born in Warren County, Illinois, in 1865, and by young adulthood was moving steadily westward—first to Missouri to attend Tarkio College, then to Greeley, Colorado, where he earned a master’s degree from the Colorado State Normal School, and eventually to New Mexico as the first president of the New Mexico Normal School in Las Vegas (now Highlands University). By the time he arrived in New Mexico, he was already familiar with the area, having made frequent visits while pursuing a “fresh air” treatment for his wife’s worsening tuberculosis. During these extended visits, he became fascinated with prehistoric ruins, particularly those at Frijoles Canyon, already well publicized from Bandelier’s earlier work.

Through his fervent interest in regional archaeology, Hewett met and forged key friendships with several like-minded and influential individuals, all of whom were founding members of the Archaeological Society of Santa Fe. Among the associates who eventually would support him throughout his career were Frank Springer, attorney and president of the Maxwell Land Grant Company; John R. McFie, territorial justice and



New Mexico Historical Society Museum as it appeared ca.1920 in the east end of the Palace of the Governors. Rivalries between Society President L. Bradford Prince and MNM Director Edgar Lee Hewett resulted in a tense co-location in the Palace. Courtesy of Photo Archives, Palace of the Governors (MNM/DCA), Neg. No. 001487.

“... **there is** not another [state] in this Union that has done more for the **happiness and enlightenment of its people** than has New Mexico.” —Edgar Lee Hewett

## Founders and Visionaries

**Most written accounts** covering the early years of the Museum of New Mexico and SAR have focused on Edgar Lee Hewett and his many notable successes. While Hewett certainly deserves his due as a visionary, he did not create and maintain the Museum of New Mexico alone. A great number of people have contributed to the success of MNM over the past century beginning with the original founders. Throughout his tenure, Hewett was supported by a small group of talented individuals, professionals in their own right, who shared his vision and worked tirelessly to see it fulfilled. MNM would not exist today if not for Hewett’s steadfast allies **Frank Springer**, **John R. McFie**, and **Paul A. F. Walter**, who stood by him through years of success and, at times, conflict. **Alice C. Fletcher** advocated for Hewett’s position in the AIA and was his closest ally in lobbying for the school’s location in Santa Fe. **Charles F. Lummis** lent his support and advice serving on the first MNM Board of Regents. Hewett greatly respected **Adolph Bandelier’s** earlier work on the Pajarito Plateau, and Bandelier served briefly on the early museum staff. Later, Hewett encouraged women to take active roles in archaeology, opening the door for notable MNM curators **Bertha Dutton**, **Marjorie Lambert**, and **E. Boyd**. While no administrator served as long as Hewett (thirty-nine years), later directors **Boaz Long** (1948–56), **George Ewing** (1973–81) and **Thomas A. Livesay** (1985–2000) enjoyed long, successful tenures with MNM.



Edgar Lee Hewett, founder and first director of MNM.



Frank Springer



John R. McFie



Paul A. F. Walter



Alice C. Fletcher



Charles F. Lummis



Adolph Bandelier

president of the society; and Paul A. F. Walter, journalist for the *Santa Fe New Mexican* (and later longtime editor of *El Palacio*, the journal of the Museum of New Mexico). Perhaps better known in this circle were Bandelier, now a leading authority in southwestern archaeology, and *Los Angeles Times* journalist Lummis, who continued to enjoy frequent sojourns in New Mexico since his famous “tramp across the continent” a quarter century earlier.

During his five years at the Normal School, Hewett began to formulate a philosophy and methodology that would characterize his professional career. It was then that he also began to organize summer field schools for aspiring archaeologists. Hewett was an advocate of hands-on education, and his stu-

dents conducted several surveys of the ruins at Frijoles Canyon. As a result of this work, Hewett became a fierce proponent of the protection of archaeological sites against destructive pothunters and further degradation by untrained amateurs. Although it was innovative, the field-school concept was considered controversial at the time and contributed to his termination as president of the Normal School in 1903. This apparent setback ultimately proved fortunate for Hewett, who now had the time to bolster his academic credentials, earning a Ph.D. in anthropology at the University of Geneva. He also could turn his full attention to the business of protecting prehistoric sites, and he was instrumental in drafting the landmark American Antiquities Act, which was passed by Congress in 1906.



The Palace of the Governors portal under construction in 1913. Jesse Nusbaum's remodel dramatically changed the building's nineteenth century appearance into what is now referred to as Santa Fe Style. Courtesy of Photo Archives, Palace of the Governors (MNM/DCA), Neg. No. 13078.

## The Original Fixer-upper

**The Museum of New Mexico** and School of American Archaeology were permitted to reside in the Palace of the Governors with the stipulation that Edgar Lee Hewett would facilitate a much-needed remodel of the 300-year-old building. He promptly assigned the project to his first employee: twenty-one-



Jesse Nusbaum

year-old Jesse Nusbaum. The energetic and fun-loving Nusbaum had just rumbled into town from Las Vegas on his Excelsior motorcycle—the first in Santa Fe. Despite his youth, Nusbaum was well suited to the task, expertly directing the work of stabilizing the foundations and crumbling walls, modernizing the heating system, and removing all traces of the Victorian décor favored by earlier occupants. The young builder was intent on restoring the Palace's appearance as he imagined it looked before the 1846 American occupation. Beginning in 1909, renovation progressed methodically room-by-room over a five-year span. Nusbaum's crowning achievement was the reconstruction of the Palace portal, not originally slated for remodeling but completed as a result of his vigorous insistence. There had been no money budgeted for a new portal, but when Nusbaum publicly exhibited a scale model of how the completed building would look (in the *New-Old Santa Fe Exhibit of 1912*), the community overwhelmingly approved and donated the necessary funds. By the time all remodeling was completed in 1913, the Palace of the Governors had become one of the earliest examples of what was then called the New-Old Santa Fe Architecture. Nusbaum's work on the Palace would prove to be a warm-up for an even more ambitious museum construction project before the end of the decade.

Hewett's work at Frijoles Canyon and his role in the success of the Antiquities Act had not gone unnoticed in the American archaeological community. In early 1907 the Archaeological Institute of America (AIA) appointed Hewett its first director of American archaeology and with this new position determined that a school of American archaeology should also be established somewhere in the West.

Hewett was certain that Santa Fe was the best location for the school and with noted anthropologist and AIA board member Alice Cunningham Fletcher lobbied hard to persuade the rest of the board. Not all were persuaded. Several members were adamantly opposed to the selection of Santa Fe, favoring Denver, Los Angeles, or Mexico City. In the end, Hewett prevailed, and in 1907 a majority of the board voted to establish the School for American Archaeology (SAA) in Santa Fe. (In 1917 the organization was renamed School of American Research and is now known as the School of Advanced Research, or SAR). Building on this victory, Hewett and the SAA quickly moved to organize an annual summer field school, attracting a number of young, enthusiastic, and later influential archaeologists to New Mexico for research work in Frijoles Canyon. Early participants included A.V. Kidder, Sylvanus Morley, Kenneth Chapman, and Jesse Nusbaum—each of whom became prominent in the fields of archaeology and ethnology.

## A Museum Begins

The summer field surveys uncovered numerous objects of antiquity, including excellent examples of Native American pottery. With so many fine artifacts being recovered at Frijoles Canyon and elsewhere, the SAA board believed that the general public would be interested in seeing the results of the school's work. Hewett began plans to establish a museum that



The Museum of Art under construction in 1917. Located across the street from the Palace of the Governors, the new museum would provide a much-needed venue for the rapidly expanding artist community. Courtesy of Photo Archives, Palace of the Governors (MNM/DCA), Neg. No. 012972.

could house and display items recovered by the school. For this purpose he proposed that both the school and museum be headquartered in the old Palace of the Governors on the plaza in Santa Fe. The oldest public building in New Mexico Territory, the Palace and had been home to Spanish, Mexican, and American governors since 1610.

In 1909 the incumbent governor, George Curry, was preparing to vacate his Palace quarters and move to the new Governor's Mansion, but the east end of the building was still occupied by the museum of the New Mexico Historical Society (NMHS). Counter to Hewett's plans, Historical Society



L. Bradford Prince

president and former governor L. Bradford Prince was negotiating to gain more space within the Palace. To Prince the Historical Society's claim on the Palace was stronger than that of a relative newcomer because the building had been home to the NMHS museum for twenty-five years. Meanwhile, the always-ambitious Hewett was determined to gain primary control over the Palace. Each man lobbied vigorously for his own plan, but in the end Hewett prevailed upon the Territorial Legislature. Aided behind the scenes by his political allies Springer and McFie, he craftily sweetened the deal by proposing that the new museum be owned and supported by the New Mexico territorial government but managed at no additional charge by Hewett on behalf of the SAA. The idea of a territorial museum appealed greatly to the sensibilities of legislators with dreams of statehood, and on February 19, 1909, the Museum of New Mexico (MNM) was established by the

New Mexico Territorial Legislature. The Historical Society was allowed to remain where it was, but Hewett, much to his satisfaction, was granted use of the west-end rooms and administrative control over the entire building. Through the next twenty years, the two museums continued to coexist in the Palace, but the strained relationship between them lived on until the death of Prince in 1922. The old resentments had faded by the 1930s, when MNM assumed management of the Historical Society's rooms and collections.

The idea for the new museum was enthusiastically welcomed by the entire community (perhaps with the exception of Prince), and the plans were described in grand terms in the April 10, 1909, *Santa Fe New Mexican*: "New Mexico had never before done so great a thing for itself, as when it invited the School of American Archaeology to locate at Santa Fe and founded a museum in connection therewith."<sup>4</sup> With the official opening of the Museum of New Mexico on August 22, 1910, it was the beginning of a new era. Thousands visited the museum annually as Santa Fe began building its reputation as a cultural center.

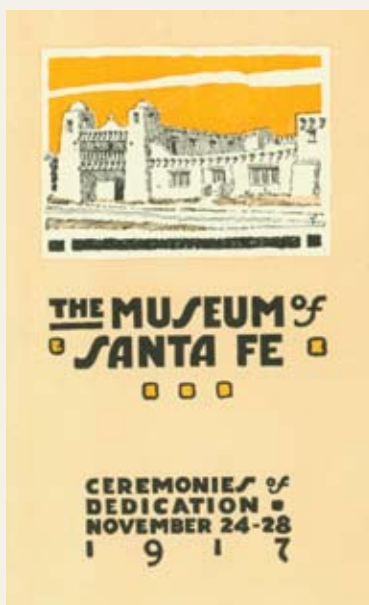
## Art Museum

At first the Museum of New Mexico was dedicated exclusively to archaeology. Exhibitions focused on ancient Native American artifacts and pottery, sometimes accompanied by illustrations or paintings of the archaeological sites where they had been discovered. Hewett initially commissioned artwork to support the archaeological displays, and it wasn't long before he began encouraging painters to create independent work representing southwestern subjects. Inspired by the suc-

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cess of the Taos Society painters, he worked to attract artists such as Robert Henri, John Sloan, and others to Santa Fe. Museum staff artist Kenneth Chapman encouraged Native American artists at the same time, beginning with Julian and Maria Martinez of San Ildefonso Pueblo, to create pottery and drawings in the style of their ancestors.

Soon Santa Fe experienced an influx of artists eager to become part of a growing art colony. With this new wave of activity the Palace of the Governors proved to be too small for both the archaeology exhibitions and the rapidly growing art collections and shows. By 1916 the decision was made to build a new facility dedicated entirely to art. The museum purchased property across the street from the Palace and began construction of the New Mexico Art Museum under the able direction of Jesse Nusbaum. Board of Regents member Frank Springer, a driving force behind the new museum project, raised funds for roughly half of the \$60,000 required; the other half came from the



**ABOVE:** Cover of Art Museum dedication ceremony leaflet, November 1917.

Courtesy of the Fray Angélico Chávez History Library.

### Fiesta and Indian Market

**More than the city's skyline changed.** Annual traditions that Santa Feans now take for granted were initiated by the efforts of the early museum staff. Originating as a religious observance in 1712 but dormant since 1912, the annual Santa Fe Fiesta was revived in 1919 under the museum's direction and expanded to include history pageants and Indian dances. The Fiesta's emphasis on Native American cultures was expanded in 1922 with the introduction of Indian Fair, which showcased and offered contemporary Indian art for sale. Indian Fair became so successful that by 1926 it had grown into its own event, independent of the Museum of New Mexico. Now known as Santa Fe Indian Market, this annual event has provided a vibrant showcase for generations of Native American artists, attracting many thousands of art collectors and tourists to the Plaza in late August.

New Mexico legislature. At the dedication ceremony on November 25, 1917, Springer delivered the address: "This commanding structure—an edifice which in its massive grandeur, its majestic simplicity, and its historic significance, thrills all beholders with a new sensation—rises before us as a thing well done. And it will stand for this and future generations, as an imperishable monument to the enlightened public spirit of the people of this young state."<sup>5</sup>

Designed by the architectural firm of Rapp, Rapp and Hendrickson, the new museum combined elements from the mission churches at Acoma Pueblo and elsewhere. It quickly became recognized as a prime example of the emerging Pueblo Revival

architectural style. The Santa Fe Chamber of Commerce embraced the "New-Old" architectural examples set by the New Mexico Art Museum and Palace of the Governors, largely transforming the appearance of the city over the next forty years. This grand new facility became a welcome home for the nascent artist community and in its early years provided an unjuried venue for all who wished to exhibit their work.



John D. Rockefeller with Edgar L. Hewett, 1924 outside St. Francis Auditorium at the Museum of Art. Photo Archives, Palace of the Governors (MNM/DCA), Neg. No. 7361.

## State Monuments

**As the primary author** of the Antiquities Act of 1906, Museum of New Mexico Director Edgar Lee Hewett, maintained a lifelong passion for protecting historic and prehistoric locations. He undoubtedly approved when the legislature established the State Monument system in 1931 with the intent to designate key sites in New Mexico for protection and interpretation. Placed under the administrative umbrella of the Museum of New Mexico in 1935, nineteen monuments have been designated over the years, with five later transferred to the National Park Service and some never activated. As of 2009, eight state monuments exist and six are active: Coronado, Lincoln, Jemez, Fort Selden, Bosque Redondo Memorial at Fort Sumner, and El Camino Real International Heritage Center.



Dedication ceremonies at Coronado State Monument, 1940. Courtesy of Photo Archives, Palace of the Governors (MNM/DCA), Neg. No. 057813.

## Laboratory of Anthropology

By all accounts Edgar Lee Hewett enjoyed the authority and status of his position as dual director of the Museum of New Mexico and SAR. Used to things going his way, he was reluctant to accommodate those with opposing views. His uncompromising attitude served him well until developments in the late 1920s precipitated a direct challenge to his sole authority. It began in 1924 when the philanthropist John D. Rockefeller visited Santa Fe to meet Hewett and see the museum's collections. Rockefeller was impressed, indicated that he would like to fund MNM in some way, and requested that Hewett send him a report outlining areas in which he might lend his support.

While others would have jumped at this golden opportunity, for reasons unknown Hewett did not submit a proposal. Two years later in June 1926, at the recommendation of Jesse Nusbaum (by then director of Mesa Verde National Monument), Rockefeller toured the Santa Fe museums with MNM staff associate Kenneth Chapman while Hewett was out of town. Chapman had a passion for Pueblo pottery design and in 1922 had helped to found the Indian Arts Fund (IAF). An independent organization dedicated to preserving and collecting the finest examples of ancient Pueblo pottery design, their goal was to inspire contemporary Pueblo potters. During the tour, Rockefeller and his wife happened upon the private IAF collection, housed temporarily in the Art Museum basement. Impressed both

with Chapman and the IAF pottery, the Rockefellers suggested that such a fine collection should not be hidden in a dark museum basement. They requested that Chapman outline the needs of the museum and submit a proposal on behalf of the IAF for a facility to house the collection. As Nusbaum recalled years later, “[Rockefeller] recognized that New Mexico was a small state, but a worthy center for cultural research and was willing to assist in promoting to greater advantage, what had already begun.”<sup>6</sup> Chapman promptly delivered his report.

When Hewett learned about the visit and Chapman's report, he was furious and quickly submitted his belated proposal—but too late. Rockefeller already had decided to support Chapman's plans and sidestepped any involvement with Hewett or MNM by funding a private, rival institution dedicated to archaeological research called the Laboratory of Anthropology, Inc. Property was purchased south of Santa Fe from sisters Martha and Elizabeth White on what is now known as Museum Hill™, and a new building was designed by architect John Gaw Meem. Once the facility was completed in 1931, the IAF pottery collection had a new home, Chapman had a new job as curator, and the Lab had a new director in Nusbaum, who had been lured from Mesa Verde. The Lab's very presence in Santa Fe was a bitter pill for Hewett. He felt betrayed by his former colleagues, and the relationship between the two organizations was less than amicable for years.





The Laboratory of Anthropology as it appeared on a snowy day in 1951. The building, designed by architect John Gaw Meem, opened in 1931. Photograph by Henry Deudahl. Courtesy of Photo Archives, Palace of the Governors (MNM/DCA), Neg. No. 006759.

Unlike the state-sponsored Museum of New Mexico, the privately funded Lab solicited sources of revenue (other than the Rockefellers) over time. This plan had seemed like a good idea, but the timing could not have been worse. The Lab opened at the beginning of the Great Depression, and private funding became increasingly difficult to secure. Rockefeller's support ended in 1935 and the lean times continued into the next decade as the country endured World War II. Through it all, the Lab struggled to remain solvent, but the outlook was grim. Relief came in 1947 from an unlikely solution—a

merger with the Museum of New Mexico—which became possible only after Hewett had died.

Edgar Lee Hewett stayed active in the final years of his life, working to realize new goals for the museum system. In 1938 he initiated a branch museum program that extended the Museum of New Mexico's influence throughout the state. Branches were designated in Carlsbad, Silver City, Las Vegas, and Farmington, among other places, before the program was discontinued in 1942 at the onset of World War II. In 1940, likely in response to his new rival, the Laboratory of Anthropology, Hewett opened a space dedicated to Indian culture in the old armory building behind the Palace. Named the Hall of Ethnology, the remodeled building housed exhibitions on Indian cultures of the Southwest until the 1980s, when the Museum of Indian Arts & Culture opened. Hewett served in a dual directorship of the Museum of New Mexico and the School of American Research until his death December 31, 1946, at age 81. Despite the uncertainty of a future without their founding father, both institutions would benefit from new leadership and a fresh perspective, and so would the Laboratory of Anthropology.



Kenneth M. Chapman at work in the Palace of the Governors, ca. 1915. Chapman would later leave MNM to become founding curator at the Laboratory of Anthropology. After the merger in 1948, he again found himself on the MNM staff. Courtesy of Photo Archives, Palace of the Governors (MNM/DCA), Neg. No. 013312.



**ABOVE:** The Museum of International Folk Art as it appeared shortly after its dedication in September 1953. Courtesy of the Museum of International Folk Art Library Archives.



Sylvanus Morley

To ease the transition after Hewett's imposing thirty-nine-year directorship, the Board of Regents selected a familiar face from the past to return to the fold—now-prominent archaeologist Sylvanus Morley was invited to take the helm. Since his early adventures on Hewett's archaeological surveys of the Southwest, Morley had spent his career focused on stud-

ies of the pre-Columbian Mayas in Mexico. He was welcomed back to Santa Fe in 1947 and quickly achieved a merger with the Laboratory of Anthropology. No doubt Morley had more moves in mind, but he died unexpectedly on September 2, 1948. The Board of Regents quickly appointed former diplomat Boaz Long as his replacement.

## Museum of International Folk Art

In contrast to the lean years of the previous two decades, the 1950s were a time of expansion and change for the museum system. Chicago philanthropist Florence Dibell Bartlett donated funding in 1950 to establish a new museum dedicated to folk art. A world traveler, Bartlett had amassed a collection of more than 2,500 objects of folk art from thirty-four countries and had decided the time had come to bestow all on the Museum of New Mexico. A part-time resident, Bartlett had enjoyed at least twenty summers on her property in Alcalde, New Mexico, where she had intended to open her folk art museum.



Museum of International Folk Art founder Florence Dibell Bartlett examining an artifact from the collection with Director Robert Bruce Inverarity, 1953. Inverarity left his position in 1954 and Bartlett died later that year, but both made lasting marks on the museum. Courtesy of the Museum of International Folk Art Library Archives.

After friends argued that the location was too remote, Bartlett negotiated for a site on the southeast side of Santa Fe, adjacent to the Laboratory of Anthropology. Meem again was selected to design the building, ground was broken in the fall of 1950, and the International Folk Art Foundation was organized to provide additional financial support for the institution to come. Three years later, on September 5, 1953, the new Museum of International Folk Art opened under the directorship of Robert Bruce Inverarity. One of the first museums in the world dedicated to collecting and displaying folk art, it quickly became one of the most popular attractions in Santa Fe.

## The Big Split

Major administrative changes came about in the years following Hewett's death. The combined School of American Research and Museum of New Mexico became separate institutions in 1959, ending a fifty-year marriage. It had always been an odd arrangement—a private institution managing a state museum, but it had worked well enough when Hewett was alive and in control of both. In the thirteen years since his death, however, some began to question the legality of such an arrangement. A



The first Highway Salvage project on U.S. 285 in 1954.  
Courtesy of the Laboratory of Anthropology Archives.

## Office of Archaeological Studies

**The first highway archaeology program** in the nation began as the Highway Salvage Program of the Laboratory of Anthropology, later known as the Lab's "Research Section." In 1954, the Lab began contracting services to the New Mexico Department of Transportation to conduct archaeological surveys and excavations prior to road building. The program saved numerous sites that would have otherwise been lost to construction and in time influenced the National Highway Act of 1956, which included standard provisions to fund archaeological work prior to road construction. The postwar economic boom of the 1950s provided plenty of new road projects, pipelines, and building construction that required contract archaeology. The Research Section of the Laboratory of Anthropology was reorganized as an independent entity in 1990 and became the Office of Archaeological Studies.

state legislative committee concluded that it was unconstitutional for the private SAR to manage the state-sponsored museums. Like the merger with the Laboratory of Anthropology, it is unlikely that a separation could have occurred without a fight while Hewett was alive, but now the ruling squared with fresh thinking. After the split was completed in 1959, Director Wayne Mauzy remained with the Museum of New Mexico, and the School of American Research was left to find its way. After some initial uncertainty, SAR rebounded, and today it continues as a respected, private research institution.

## Decades of Growth

The Museum of New Mexico faced a dramatic shift in the way it would be administered in the early 1960s. Without Hewett's autocratic style and its unconventional relationship with a private organization, the state museum system eventually became more professionalized with the benefits—and sometimes disadvantages—of added layers of bureaucracy. Subsequent museum leadership built on the foundations established in the early years, enhancing the system and establishing a traveling exhibitions program, first in 1957 at the Museum of International Folk Art. Later, representing the whole museum, a semi trailer carried a mobile exhibition, the Museum on Wheels, throughout the state. The statewide outreach program continues with the Van of Enchantment, a modified RV-turned-museum that visits thousands of schoolchildren at their schools and tens of thousands of New Mexicans at festivals and events each year.

Taking a cue from the successful Folk Art Foundation, a dedicated group of museum patrons established the Museum of New Mexico Foundation in 1962. The foundation assumed fundraising initiatives for all MNM museums and monuments and also instituted the popular Museum Shops, beginning with the Artes Shop that was located in the Art Museum basement.

The old Elks Club building behind the Palace was purchased in 1962 to become the new administrative headquarters for MNM, and it served in this capacity until 2003, when it was razed to make way for a new history museum. Replacing the Elks Club facility was the Center for Museum Resources, which opened in 2003 on Museum Hill™. Also that year, the Office of Cultural Affairs, created in 1979 as an umbrella organization for the MNM and other state-owned cultural properties, was elevated to cabinet-level status as the Department of Cultural Affairs.



**ABOVE:** The entrance to the Museum of Indian Arts & Culture as it appears today.

**RIGHT:** As seen from the opposite side in its original form in 1987 before extensive remodeling. Photographs courtesy of MIAC/Laboratory of Anthropology Archives.



## Museum of Indian Arts & Culture

In the decades after the Laboratory of Anthropology was saved from the brink of extinction by merging with MNM, there was a growing desire to display more art from its large and developing collections. Small exhibitions were sometimes mounted, but as a research facility, the Lab had not been designed to serve as a museum space. Similar to the challenge the Palace had encountered in providing space for more art exhibitions, the Lab needed to expand if it was to present larger Indian art exhibitions. Expand it did in 1987, with the opening of the Museum of Indian Arts & Culture next door. The 31,000-square-foot museum diverged radically from the 1920s Meem design, adopting a contemporary architectural aesthetic. After it opened, however, the staff began to have second thoughts, as the building's original design proved to be problematic as a functional museum space. Realizing that changes were necessary, the decision was made to remodel. By 1997, when the Amy Rose Bloch Wing was added to house the exhibition *Here, Now and Always*, the museum had a new, yet familiar look, more closely resembling its parent institution the Laboratory of Anthropology.

## Expansion

As MNM neared the century mark, several major building projects continued what had become a tradition of expansion. In 1982 the New Wing Gallery doubled exhibition space at the New Mexico Museum of Art. In 1998 the Neutrogena Wing expanded the Museum of International Folk Art, already enlarged by the Girard Wing. The old parking lot on

Museum Hill™ was removed to make way for Milner Plaza in 2001, creating a landscaped pedestrian area between the Folk Art Museum and the Museum of Indian Arts & Culture. State Monuments launched two new sites in 2005: the Bosque Redondo Memorial at Fort Sumner and the El Camino Real International Heritage Center, which opened south of Socorro. In May 2009 the New Mexico History Museum will open adjacent to the Palace of the Governors, not only to cap a century of progress but also to bring the public's attention full circle, back to where it all began in 1909.

## Bound by Tradition

Even though the venerable Museum of New Mexico itself was legislatively dissolved in 2003 and each of its member institutions became divisions within the New Mexico Department of Cultural Affairs, the MNM has not gone away. In fact, it continues to exist in more ways than not. It lives on in the mission and activities of the New Mexico Department of Cultural Affairs. Its original member museums and monuments are still governed by the Museum of New Mexico Board of Regents. Fundraising continues by the Museum of New Mexico Foundation. The museums still are served by centralized exhibition, marketing, outreach, and conservation departments; by the award-winning Museum of New Mexico Press; and by *El Palacio* magazine, which has covered MNM's research and accomplishments for the past ninety-five years. Administrative changes be damned, the Museum of New Mexico's museums and monuments are bound together today in tangible, productive ways—and forever by tradition.

## A Century of Influence

The rustic version of Santa Fe that so charmed Charles Lummis in 1884 is long gone, but thousands of visitors each year still feel the city’s undeniable attraction. It is renowned as a cultural center and admired for its style. Today Santa Fe thrives in no small part because of the Museum of New Mexico. Its founders did not start out to transform Santa Fe materially but rather to make it a center of learning, to study the secrets of New Mexico’s ancient past. The Museum of New Mexico has had a hand in nearly every aspect of archaeology, art, history, and preservation in New Mexico during the past century, either by leading or inspiring others to make their own mark. From the very beginning the MNM was in a unique position to influence and shape Santa Fe’s cultural development and assist in an economic recovery at the same time. It celebrated the Native American and Hispanic cultures of the region by generating renewed interest in their traditions and artwork. Popular annual events such as Santa Fe Fiesta,



San Ildefonso Pueblo potters Julian and Maria Martinez were among the first to benefit from early museum programs that promoted Native American art. Courtesy of Photo Archives, Palace of the Governors (MNM/DCA), Neg. No. 164605.

Indian Market, and most recently the Santa Fe International Folk Art Market can attribute their origins to the involvement of the Museum of New Mexico. This influence extended to architectural styles, artistic trends, and the emergence of New Mexico as a haven for writers, poets, painters, photographers, and other creative natures. MNM has provided a home for thousands to pursue meaningful professional careers in New Mexico, engaging in archaeology, ethnology, history, art, museumology, and related disciplines.

Directly or indirectly the Museum of New Mexico has drawn visitors here and ultimately shaped their perceptions of New Mexico and the Southwest. The cultural transforma-



The New Mexico History Museum under construction in April 2008. Opening in May 2009, the new museum caps a century of expansion for the Museum of New Mexico. Photographed by Aero Photo. Courtesy of the New Mexico History Museum.

tion of 1920s Santa Fe, however, did not bring prosperity or enlightenment to everyone. Historians such as Chris Wilson in *The Myth of Santa Fe* and Hal K. Rothman in *Devil’s Bargain* have rightly questioned the trade-offs between a successful tourist economy and the marginalization of families who have lived here for generations. With no easy answers, Santa Fe still has work to do in addressing those questions.

New Mexicans can take great pride in knowing that our state has maintained a century-long tradition of promoting its own unique culture. Throughout the state, museums have been established and thrived as a result of the environment originally created by the Museum of New Mexico. As Edgar Lee Hewett explained in 1931, “We have realized our unique resources and made the most of them. In addition to these resources that are peculiarly our own, there must have been in the minds of our own people a spirit, of intelligence, of great faith and keen ambition for better things, a profound devotion to their state. It is certainly true that money is not everything. In a most important sense New Mexico is a state of boundless wealth.”<sup>77</sup> ■

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**Endnotes** and suggested reading available online at: [www.elpalacio.org](http://www.elpalacio.org)  
**Portrait photographs** courtesy of Photo Archives, Palace of the Governors (MNM/DCA), negative numbers: **Page 29:** Hewett 7380, Springer 045486, McFie 010263, Walter 13127, Fletcher 009874, Lummis 007745, Bandelier 007745. **Page 30:** Nusbaum 081919. **Page 31:** Prince 050446. **Page 35:** Morley 010314.

## Endnotes

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- 4 *Santa Fe: The Autobiography of a Southwestern Town*,  
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- 5 *Santa Fe New Mexican*, November 26, 1917
- 6 *Tierra Dulce: Reminiscences from the Jesse Nusbaum Papers*,  
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- 7 *El Palacio* February 1931. Pg 50

## Selected Bibliography

The following books are recommended for more information about the origins and influence of the Museum of New Mexico.

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