



The New Mexico Museum of Art shown in a hand-colored lantern slide, ca. 1920. Photographer unknown.
Courtesy Palace of the Governors Photo Archives (NMHM/DCA), Neg. No. LS.0454.

THE ADOBE AMBASSADOR

The Curious Backstory of the New Mexico Museum of Art's Genesis . . . and Edifice

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Next year will mark the centenary of the debut of the Museum of Fine Arts in Santa Fe, now called the New Mexico Museum of Art. At the opening on November 24, 1917, lead donor Frank Springer, the New Mexico attorney most famous for representing the trustees of the Maxwell Land Grant in Colfax County, paid tribute to Edgar L. Hewett, founding director of both the School of American Archaeology (1907) and the Museum of New Mexico (1909), for his role in seeing the project to completion.

The men had become acquainted twenty years earlier, when Hewett, a professor at the Colorado State Normal School in Greeley, Colorado (now the University of Northern Colorado), was conducting archaeological excavations on New Mexico's Pajarito Plateau. Springer was instrumental in Hewett's appointment in 1898 as the first president of New Mexico Normal at Las Vegas (now New Mexico Highlands University). In 1906 Hewett received a fellowship from the Archaeological Institute of America to investigate whether there might be a connection between the ruins in the southwestern United States and those in Chihuahua, Mexico. The next two years saw Hewett appointed as the founding director of both the School of American Archaeology (1907) and the Museum of New Mexico (1909) in Santa Fe. He immediately began ambitious archaeological surveys and excavations in the southwestern US, southern Mexico, and Central America.

The story of the art museum began soon afterwards, in 1911, when the San Diego businessman John Collier asked Hewett to organize exhibits for the two-year-long Panama-California Exposition of 1915, a fair launched to celebrate the opening of the Panama Canal. The Panama-California Exposition committee, Hewett among them, planned a regionally focused fair, with exhibits and architecture that evoked the history, arts, and economy of southern California and the southwestern US states from their original Native occupation through the Spanish Colonial and Mexican periods and extending to the present. The fair was the first opportunity for New Mexico's leaders to promote the state's cultural and economic resources on a

national platform, following its admission into the US in 1912.

Among the attractions Hewett and his team produced were an Indian village peopled with actual Pueblo and Navajo families, a replica Ancestral Puebloan cliff dwelling, anthropology and archaeology exhibits, and a fine arts exhibit with paintings by modern artists. Hewett also successfully campaigned for the inclusion of a New Mexico Building to highlight the state's cultural resources. He hired Isaac Hamilton Rapp and his firm to design it. It was the first time that this building's architectural style, Spanish-Pueblo Revival, was intentionally deployed as a symbol of New Mexican identity. (Curiously enough, Rapp designed an earlier, 1908 iteration as a warehouse in Morley, Colorado.) The New Mexico Building, erected in California, combined the facade and towers of the mission church at Acoma Pueblo with the open balcony of the mission church at San Felipe Pueblo.

The New Mexico Building (1915), now San Diego's Balboa Park Club building, became a model for the New Mexico Museum of Art (1917). A visual comparison reveals their similarities. But more importantly for the present story, New Mexico's contributions to the Panama-California Exposition led directly to the 1917 opening of the art museum in Santa Fe. At the fair, the New Mexico Building symbolized the newest state in the Union and was deemed such a public relations success that it had to be re-created in Santa Fe.

THE NEW MEXICO BUILDING

Rapp, Rapp and Hendrickson was a prominent architectural firm in both New Mexico and Colorado. This was not Isaac Rapp's first foray into world's fair architecture; his firm designed the New Mexico pavilion at the 1904 Louisiana Purchase Exposition, held in St. Louis. The pavilion was designed in the California Mission style, thought at the time by many Santa Feans to be an appropriate symbol of southwestern US identity. Rapp had already designed several buildings in Santa Fe, including the territorial capitol (1900), the Governor's Residence (1908), and the Elk's Club (1911), all now demolished



Edgar L. Hewett (1865–1946) and Sylvanus Griswold Morley (1883-1948).
 Courtesy Palace of the Governors Photo Archives (NMHM/DCA),
 Neg. Nos. 7380, 010316

or unrecognizable. Until the New Mexico Building, the firm was best known for designing buildings in a variety of styles popular at the turn of the twentieth century: Richardsonian Romanesque (Masonic Lodge, Las Vegas, New Mexico, 1894); Moorish Revival (Temple Aaron Synagogue, Trinidad, Colorado, 1889); and Neoclassical (New Mexico State Capitol, 1900, and the territorial Governor's Residence, 1908, Santa Fe).

During the years between the St. Louis and San Diego fairs, Santa Fe's business and cultural leaders, led by Hewett and his staff, carefully considered what style of architecture would best represent the city's history and culture, and help attract both investment and tourism. The organizers of New Mexico's building at the St. Louis fair selected the California Mission style to represent the state because the region's "brown and round" vernacular adobe architecture was quickly being replaced by buildings constructed in the full range of architecture styles that you could see in any US city in 1900.

As Chris Wilson notes in *The Myth of Santa Fe* (1997), throughout the 1880s and 1890s, the *Santa Fe New Mexican* steadily criticized Santa Fe's native architecture and in 1891 called Santa Fe Plaza-area business owners to action: "The unsightly, unhealthy and dangerous portals on the principal street must go, get a move on yourself and remember that you are living in the 19th century and not the 16th." Racism, xenophobia, and religious intolerance colored this debate, since Santa Fe's and New Mexico's Spanish-speaking citizens were widely seen as foreign to the US, which played a part in delaying statehood for more than sixty years. Many Anglo settlers viewed New Mexico's vernacular architecture as a symbol of the territory's alleged hopeless backwardness.

But Hewett and the staff of the school and museum disagreed, and soon swayed Santa Fe's perception of its adobe architecture. Between 1909 and 1912, Jesse L. Nusbaum directed the rehabilitation of the Palace of the Governors for the School of American Archaeology and Museum of New Mexico, replacing the Territorial-style wooden porch with a Spanish Colonial adobe portal similar to those that had been finally expunged from the plaza in 1893. Nusbaum was Hewett's first employee, a talented photographer and builder. In another highly visible downtown project, in 1910 the archaeologist Sylvanus G. Morley (a Hewett protégé) bought and renovated the Roque Lovato house, an adobe building dating to the mid-1700s. In an essay published in 1915 in the magazine *Old Santa Fe*, Morley explained that the Roque Lovato house project aimed to prove that Spanish Colonial style buildings, made of adobe and wood, were both historically interesting and well suited for modern living.

In spring 1912, just months before statehood, Santa Fe mayor Arthur Seligman appointed Hewett and Morley to the City Planning Board. By the fall, the board had produced a city plan that promoted Santa Fe's adobe architecture as authentic and worthy of preservation, and organized the New-Old Santa Fe exhibit at the Palace of the Governors to showcase the proposals. The exhibit included Nusbaum's extensive photographic survey of Santa Fe's adobe architecture, as well as paintings and photographs of New Mexico's Pueblo Indian mission churches by museum employees Carlos Vierra and Kenneth Chapman. Models of the Palace of the Governors and watercolors showing how the Spanish-Pueblo Revival style could be adapted to contemporary home design rounded out the show. By the time Hewett hired Rapp to design the New Mexico Building for the 1915 San Diego fair, the Spanish-Pueblo Revival style was back on solid ground as the symbol of the new state's identity.

The New Mexico Building was built for about \$20,000, with an additional \$30,000 spent for exhibits promoting New Mexico's history, culture, and economy. The exhibits recycled some of the content of the New-Old Santa Fe exhibit, with many additions relating to New Mexico's landscape, history, and economy. Visitors enjoyed films, and lantern-slide presentations were shown in the building's St. Francis Auditorium. The official guide lists twenty-seven short films on themes as diverse as Native dances at Taos Pueblo; the Navajo Fair in Shiprock; farming in Deming; parades in Albuquerque, Clovis, Roswell, and Santa Fe; railroads in Cloudcroft and Alamogordo; and the Curry County Fair. Drama manifested offscreen



This image of the 1915 Panama-California Exposition's New Mexico Building comes from an official pamphlet of photos, bound with a silky, tasseled cord.

when a group of Taos Pueblo Indians broke into the New Mexico Building and reclaimed a film of a sacred dance taken without their permission at the pueblo.

A few of the films still exist, held in the New Mexico State Records Center and Archives in Santa Fe, and are in the process of digitization. (You can find a sidebar about these films, and links to some of them, at elpalacio.org/articles/summer16/panama-expo.pdf.) The auditorium also showed Vierra's paintings of Pueblo Indian mission churches, as well as watercolors of Santa Fe architecture by various artists. Large mural paintings by Kurt Fleischer of the ruined mission churches of Gran Quivira, Quarai, Jemez, Abo, and Pecos hung alongside photographs of Pueblo Indians and their villages by T. Harmon Parkhurst, paintings made in and around Santa Fe by Sheldon Parsons, and a portrait of Archbishop Jean-Baptiste Lamy.

For the building's St. Francis Auditorium, Hewett envisioned murals about the life of that saint and the activities of the Franciscan Order in Spain, Mexico, and Spanish Colonial New Mexico. When the first painter, Donald Beauregard, died in May

1914, Hewett asked Chapman and Vierra to finish the murals. Both were Museum of New Mexico employees who had contributed artworks to the New-Old Santa Fe Exhibit in 1912. Hewett hoped that the murals might be finished for the fair; Chapman and Vierra missed that deadline but completed the murals just in time for the New Mexico Museum of Art opening in 1917. They illuminate the walls of St. Francis Auditorium to this day.

The Main Hall of the New Mexico Building showcased the state's mines and mining industry, with cases of mineral specimens and a pyramid of coal and coke, all shown amid more photos of Pueblo Indians, Chimayo blankets, Mexican serapes, Hopi baskets, and Pueblo ceramics. In the corridor to the Hall of Governors were exhibits relating to the Santa Fe Trail era (1821–1846), with portraits of the trader Josiah Gregg, Rev. José Antonio Martínez (who tangled with Lamy), and Kit Carson. The Hall of the Governors contained portraits of all of the state governors of the Territorial period (1846–1912), shown alongside models of San Miguel Chapel, Bent's Fort, the Lucien Maxwell Ranch, the pueblo and ruins of Quarai,



This image served as the cover of a pamphlet that included photos of Taos Pueblo, women making pottery, a naked child perched on a ladder, and men making adobe bricks.

and the pueblo and mission of Pecos. The space also presented the southwestern archaeological investigations of Hewett's School of American Archaeology and Museum of New Mexico, at the Rito de los Frijoles and Tyuonyi (both now part of Bandelier National Monument), as well as at Puye and Pajarito. The second story was dedicated to exhibits about the state's forestry industry.

The New Mexico Building was often mentioned in the fair's promotional materials, and Frank Springer praised it in the pages of *El Palacio* in 1917 as a "symbol of New Mexico's awakening to the meaning of her past, to the value of her present, and to the promise of her future."

THE PAINTED DESERT

One of the most memorable attractions at the San Diego fair was the Painted Desert, a five-acre scale reproduction of a Pueblo Indian village, designed by Jesse Nusbaum. Funded by the Santa Fe Railway, the exhibit was in part intended to increase tourism to New Mexico by enticing fair visitors to travel through the Southwest on Santa Fe Railway trains and stay in Fred Harvey Hotels, part of the same business empire.

In an official guide, the Painted Desert of the Santa Fe Railway was described as follows:

Within a few acres have been gathered exhibits of actual living conditions among the Pueblo Indians and the nomadic tribes alike. In the eastern half of the desert is shown the life of the Pueblos, the Taos, Hopis, Zunis and the many tribes along the Rio Grande. The great adobe structures were built by the Indians themselves, brought over to San Diego from Arizona and New Mexico for that purpose alone. The red men will be seen weaving their rugs and blankets and shaping their pottery, and pounding out their copper and silver ornaments exactly as the southwestern Indians have done for centuries . . . building new adobe houses . . . in their ancient ceremonials in their kivas, or ritual places, half buried in the sands of the desert. They will be seen at their outdoor bake ovens and by the corrals where the grazing animals are kept . . . bringing their wares into the trading post, and exchanging them for food and white man's clothing.

On the west side of the mesa which bisects the desert will be demonstrated the life of the Navajos, dwelling in their hogans, and, like their Pueblo brothers, performing their ceremonials in their sacred ritual places. High up in the great red sandstone cliff will be seen the Cliff Dwellers, descendants of the prehistoric races which were forced to seek shelter in the inaccessible cliffs of the enduring hills.

While the practice would be considered unethical to many today, there is a long history of world's fair organizers putting living non-Western, or "primitive," people on display. Native Americans were frequently induced to appear and live in "Indian Villages" at the fairs. For San Diego, Hewett and Nusbaum hired Pueblo as well as Navajo and Apache Indians to live at the Painted Desert for months at a time, where they demonstrated arts, dances, and lifeways. The famous Native artist from San Ildefonso Pueblo, Maria Martinez, and her family were residents of the Painted Desert during 1915; viewers watched Maria making pottery, which her husband, Julian, painted.

THE FINE ARTS BUILDING

Although today most people would consider that the paintings, watercolors, and photographs displayed in the New Mexico

Building could also be shown in an art museum, the fine arts had their own exhibit in San Diego. The Fine Arts Building contained an exhibit of modern art organized by Hewett, assisted by the San Diego painter Alice Klauber, chairperson in charge of the 1915 Panama-California Exposition's art department; and the prominent US modernist painter Robert Henri, whom she introduced to Hewett. Valerie Leeds wrote in *Robert Henri in Santa Fe* (1998) that Henri planned to present a selection of modernist painters who could be considered uniquely American, closely aligning with Hewett's interest in a regionally focused fair.

While the show was dominated by painters in Henri's Ashcan School of US modern artists and The Eight (George Luks, William Glackens, John Sloan, George Bellows, Ernest Lawson), there were also works by Henri's students Carl Sprinchorn and Guy Pène du Bois, as well as paintings by the impressionists Childe Hassam and Maurice B. Prendergast, and by the western painter Joseph Henry Sharp. The exhibition was many fair visitors' first exposure to modern art, and if sales can be used as an indicator, it was not well received. Although all of the works were for sale, two years later, when the San Diego fair closed, not a single one had been purchased.

BACK IN SANTA FE

In November 1914, just a month before the opening of the Panama-California Exposition, *El Palacio* editor Paul A. F. Walter described the New Mexico Building as "so overwhelming in its massiveness, appropriateness, so typical of the Sunshine State, so expressive of its history and traditions, so artistic a unit, that already voices are loud in the demand that it be reproduced in imperishable concrete in the State Capital."

Hewett and his team saw the opportunity to grow the exhibition program of the School of American Archaeology and Museum of New Mexico. Almost as soon as the institutions moved into the Palace of the Governors in 1910, Hewett offered both local and visiting artists studio space to work and opportunities to show their work. The first solo exhibition featured the paintings of Warren Rollins. But as the institutions grew, space in the old Palace became increasingly tight, and Hewett began to plan an expansion. Frank Springer successfully lobbied the 1915 New Mexico Legislature for an appropriation for a new art museum on the Santa Fe Plaza. In early 1916, he presented the Museum of New Mexico with \$30,000 in matching funds. Jesse Nusbaum supervised the construction that began in May.



Building an horno at the Indian Village in Painted Desert Exhibit, 1915 San Diego Exposition, California. Jesse Nusbaum Collection. Courtesy Palace of the Governors Photo Archives (NMHM/DCA), Neg. No. 060377.

The New Mexico Art Museum's opening was celebrated in a special double issue of *Art and Archaeology*, the Archaeological Institute of America's publication, in early 1918.

Robert Henri curated the inaugural exhibition at the museum. While he included a few artists from the San Diego exhibits, the show was now dominated by New Mexico-based painters (including a strong showing of women), with notable additions from the Taos Society of Artists.

In the end, the art museum and its earlier versions, especially as the New Mexico Building at the Panama-California Exposition, are windows to a time when there were serious discussions about art and architecture and their value in promoting tourism and growing New Mexico's economy, topics we still debate today. The efforts of Edgar L. Hewett and his team in the years just before New Mexico statehood as well as at the San Diego fair cemented the Spanish-Pueblo Revival style of architecture as essential to Santa Fe's and New Mexico's identity. These efforts also led directly to the birth of the New Mexico Art Museum. Rapp went on to design the New Mexico School for the Deaf (1917) and La Fonda hotel in Santa Fe (1920), both key works of the Spanish-Pueblo Revival style.

At the opening, Hewett praised those who had faith in the school and museum, whose support, both moral and material, had led to the completion of "a structure which we expect to stand for ages, a monument to a noble past, an inspiration to future builders of a great state." When Hewett died in 1946, his ashes were entombed in its walls. ■

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