

Old Santa Fe Trail Building

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
Old Santa Fe Trail Building
New Mexico



MILTON SWATEK
1938

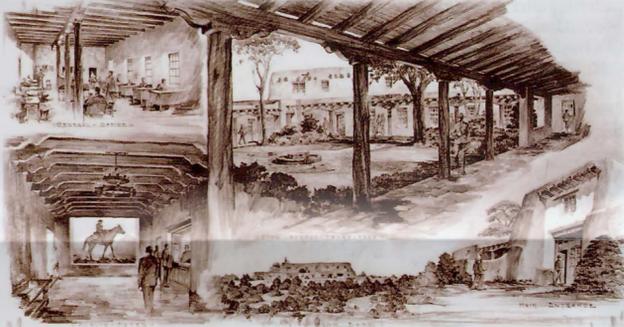
The Old Santa Fe Trail Building: The Beginning

The story of this fine old building speaks of much more than its assemblage of earth, stone and wood—remarkable as it is. This is a unique story of the people and character of the American Southwest, of the art-colony influence of the city of Santa Fe, and of a masterpiece of adobe-and-timber architecture— at once enormous in scale, unique in character, and functional in nature. And it is a story of a federal government agency dedicated to preserving and interpreting outstanding sites of natural and cultural significance in our nation's history, and of the hundreds of individuals who have worked in it over the years in support of the National Park Service (NPS) mission to . . .

... promote and regulate the use of Federal areas known as national parks, monuments and reservations . . . (and) to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wild life therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner

and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations.

Excerpt from the "Organic Act" establishing the National Park Service, Aug. 25, 1916



Original drawing by architect Cecil Doty, 1939

Yesterday: A Historic Undertaking

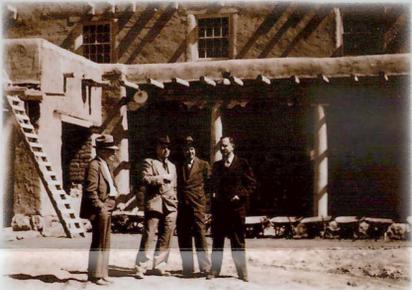
As a masterpiece of Spanish-Pueblo Revival architecture and, at 24,000 square feet, possibly the largest known adobe office building in the United States, the Old Santa Fe Trail Building is the result of the inspiration and labor of countless people.

By the early 1930s, the National Park Service needed a central location from which to manage the expanding number of southwestern national park areas. Santa Fe was chosen as the new Region III Southwest headquarters because of its central location and easy access to the five states in the region, and because of its unique mixture of cultures, and potential for broadening and enhancing NPS capabilities. According to the 1937 deed, the Laboratory of Anthropology in Santa Fe offered eight acres of land for a donation of \$1 if the National Park Service would build on this site.

Acting Regional Director Herbert T. Maier brought NPS regional architect Cecil J. Doty with him from his Oklahoma City office to design the building. Doty had extensive experience designing National Park Service 1930s "rustic architecture." This style emphasized the use of onsite or locally available materials, harmony with the surrounding landscape, strong ties to local architectural traditions, and the appearance of having been built by native craftspeople.

The "NPS rustic" style blended naturally with the Spanish-Pueblo Revival architecture that originated in Santa Fe around 1910. It melded elements found in local American Indian pueblos and the structures of Spanish settlers. It had the appearance of growing directly out of the earth, with massive, sculptural adobe walls, columns around patios, and hand-worked wood beams and roof supports. Senior National Park Service Architect Albert Good was quoted in the July 1, 1939 *Santa Fe New Mexican*, as saying: "There is probably in the United States no traditional architecture so kindred and complementary to it as the early architecture of the southwest." Doty's design masterfully adapted that architecture to the functions of an administrative office building. He worked closely with landscape architects Harvey Cornell and John Kell to integrate the landscaped patios with the architectural elements, furnishings, and fixtures.

Most of the construction materials were local. Much of the soil in the adobe bricks came directly from the excavations for the structure's two partial basements and the building's foundations, although some adobes were bought already made. The mud mortar to bond the adobes together also was made from local soil. The 399 logs cut for the vigas (hand-peeled log roof beams) and corbels (roof supports) came from the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) camp in Hyde Memorial State Park in the nearby Sangre de Cristo Mountains. Flagstone for the public area floors came from a large ranch near Pecos. The foundations of the main building were made of stone from a local quarry near Canyon Road. Construction took from 1937 to 1939.



Left to Right: Charles Gable, Herb Maier, Tom Boles & Hugh Miller watch progress on the new headquarters

The building's massive, battered-adobe walls vary between 2 and 5 feet in thickness, and are finished with cement stucco outside and white-painted plaster inside. The flat roof is bounded by parapets, and drained by wooden canales (runoff troughs) formed from sections of hand-peeled logs that extend out from the walls. The roof is supported by vigas and hand-hewn, squared beams. The lobby, east hallway, conference room, and portales (covered porches) are paved with flagstones.



Building under construction, 1938

The columns supporting the roofs above the portales are peeled ponderosa pine logs capped with decorative, sometimes hand-carved, corbels.

Hand-hewn lintels support the walls above the door and window openings. The landscaped central patio, complete with pond and surrounded by offices, is reminiscent of the style of Spanish missions with their enclosed courtyards.



Multi-paned office windows and doors around the patio have splendid views of this enclosed haven in the midst of a busy workplace

America's Depression Era / New Deal public-economic-recovery programs provided the money and labor to build the Old Santa Fe Trail Building.

From the Public Works Administration (PWA) came funds for materials and specialized workers to install mechanical systems. The main work force came from CCC Camp #833 in Santa Fe. To decorate the building, money from the Federal Arts Program was used to purchase fine examples of Pueblo Indian pottery, Navajo rugs, oil paintings, etchings, drawings, lithographs, and block prints directly from Navajo and local Pueblo artists and members of the Santa Fe and Taos art colonies of the 1930s.



Architect Cecil J. Doty

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Part of art collection laid out in the Regional Director's Office, 1940

Yesterday (continued)

Most of the 104 CCC construction workers were men ages 17-23 from Hispanic northern New Mexican families. They received room and board, plus \$30 a month in pay, \$22-\$25 of which was sent directly home to their families. Although most had little construction background, they learned quickly through hands-on experience. Using wooden molds, they hand-mixed and formed most of the 280,000 adobe bricks for the walls. They also cut, hand-peeled and installed massive pine vigas and slender Aspen poles to support the roof; custom-shaped and fit lintels; and hand-fashioned heavy, intricately carved furniture and other wood work for the offices. Other workers fashioned the pierced-tin light fixtures found throughout the building and under the portales.



CCC workers laying adobe bricks, 1938

Today: An Inspiring Work Place

The Old Santa Fe Trail Building has not changed significantly in character or function since its completion in 1939. After more than 70 years, its rustic, adobe-and-wood architecture continues to complement the landscape of piñon pine and juniper that surrounds it. Original art and pottery are displayed in the building's public spaces. The Navajo rugs purchased for the building may be exhibited at a future date. Park Service departments and divisions that work in the building have changed and evolved over the years, but today's occupants remain NPS employees. They now work for the Intermountain Region, a melding of the old Southwest and Rocky Mountain regional offices. They appreciate the opportunity to work in such a special place that evokes a sense of the national parks themselves.

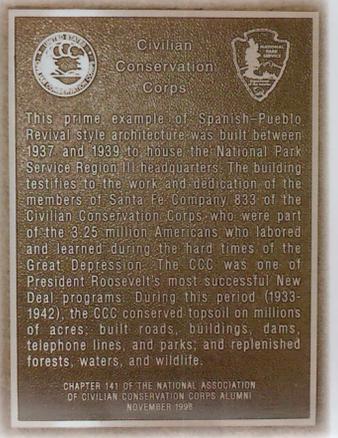


The Old Santa Fe Trail Building has not changed significantly in character or use since its completion in 1939

Over the years the building has taken on new meanings as well. Today, it stands as a lasting monument to the labors and hard-earned skills of the many veterans of the Civilian Conservation Corps and their families. It also is a keystone in Park Service history as the site of many important NPS decisions.



CCC alumni and their families gather at the Old Santa Fe Trail Building in 1998 to dedicate a plaque commemorating the CCC's work. Today, the plaque is displayed at the front entrance gate.



The Old Santa Fe Trail Building is recognized as one of the best examples of Spanish Colonial / Pueblo Revival architecture in the city of Santa Fe. The Secretary of the Interior recognized its architectural distinction and historical significance by designating it and its landscape as a National Historic Landmark in 1987.



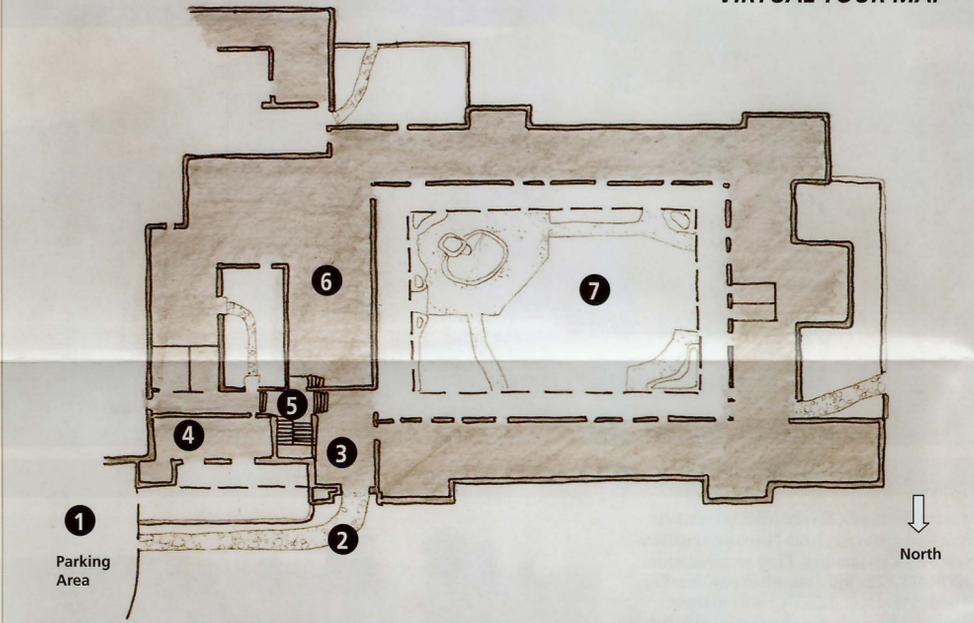
Tomorrow: Preserving a Southwest Jewel

As the nation's only conservation agency, and a world leader in the preservation of natural and cultural resources, the National Park Service will continue to occupy and preserve the Old Santa Fe Trail Building for the enjoyment, education and inspiration of present and future generations. Since 1916, the American people have entrusted the Park Service with the care of their national parks. With the help of volunteers and park partners, we are proud to safeguard nearly 400 parks, monuments and other places and to share their stories with more than 275 million visitors every year.



Old Santa Fe Trail Building

VIRTUAL TOUR MAP



1 Entrance Gate

2 Public Entrance

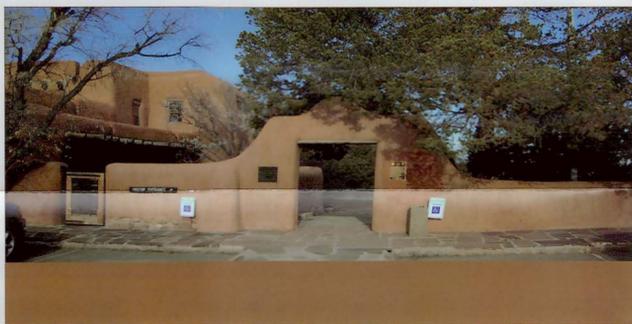
3 Lobby

4 Maier Conference Room

5 Old Southwest Regional Director's Office (upstairs—1st door on right)

6 Great Room

7 Central Patio



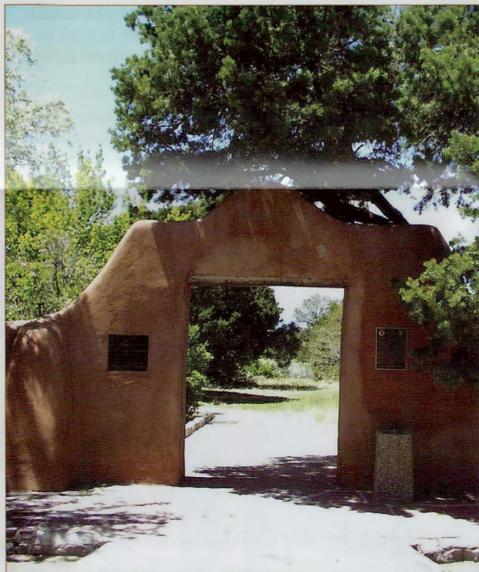
Federal security regulations no longer allow the public unescorted access through the building. Building hours may vary, inquire at the reception desk for tours.

1 Entrance Gate

This is a prime vantage point from which to appreciate the scale and rustic character of the Old Santa Fe Trail Building. Look through the "gate" toward the building and the site on which it stands. From here you can see how effectively architect Cecil Doty combined the Santa Fe Spanish-Pueblo Revival architectural style with the 1930s NPS "rustic" design concept of harmonizing buildings with their surroundings. Parking areas are screened by trees and plants. Smaller areas are separated with walls, and curving curbs of native stone make the transition from the grounds to the building less abrupt. Also, as you pass through the gate, your first view will be of native grasses and trees rather than the building itself.



Parking area edged with stones and screened with native vegetation

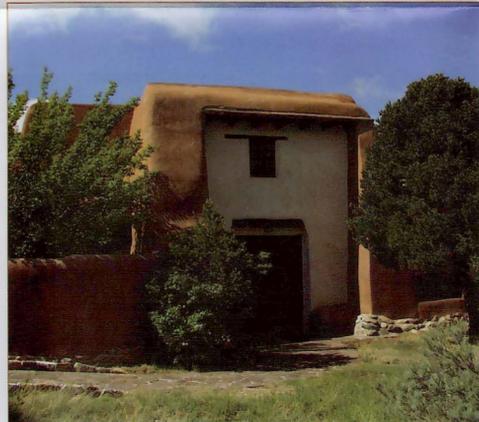


Entrance gate flanked by CCC and National Historic Landmark and bronze Plaques

2 Public Entrance

Follow the flagstone path through the gate and you'll find yourself at the immense, buttressed main entrance, which may remind you of a Southwest mission church façade. Notice how the second story of the building seems less conspicuous than the ground floor. This is because of the architect's placement of single-story walls around it. Look to the left, and you will see that the walls are layered at different heights. They gradually "step down" to the ground from the second story to the single-story portal, and then down to the patio wall -- yet another way that the architect ingeniously made the building blend into the site.

As you enter through the large double doors, flanked by the buttresses, you can see examples of the architect's attention to fine detail, a quality that characterizes the entire building. Each of the doors has 12 inset panels, which were sandblasted and marked by their creators to appear as if they had been fashioned with simple hand tools. A large, hand-hewn lintel spans the opening above the door.



Front entrance with mature vegetation, 2004

3 Lobby

Look up at the massive, hand-hewn beams of the lobby ceiling (supported on hand-carved corbels) and the large, hammered-tin chandeliers that light this cool, dark space. These features, along with the hand-carved furniture in the lobby, echo the Spanish-Pueblo Revival design. Walk over to the single window, and you will get an idea of how thick the adobe walls are at their base.

As you visit this and other rooms in the Old Santa Fe Trail Building, keep an eye out for movable and built-in decorative elements and hand-built furniture. Architect Doty designed the furniture and light fixtures to complement the building's design. The furniture is



Lobby, Old Santa Fe Trail Building

of mortise-and-tenon construction, with spindles carved in spirals. The hammered-and-pierced tin lights are all electrified. They vary from the large chandeliers in the lobby to the small, single-bulb lanterns under the portal in the courtyard. The large painting of the man on horseback on the south wall (in photo, below left) is of Stephen T. Mather, the first director of the National Park Service. Oden Hullenkramer, a Santa Fe artist born in Hungary, was commissioned to paint it under the New Deal Era recovery program. The mahogany exhibit cases, installed in the 1990s, hold early pottery pieces bought from the Santa Clara, San Ildefonso, and Cochiti pueblos. They were commissioned with 1930s Federal Arts Program funding.



Lobby, Old Santa Fe Trail Building

4 Maier Conference Room

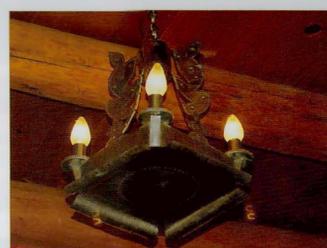


Maier Conference Room table and chairs



Intricate details are hand-carved on table and chairs

This room's natural light comes from three sources: A high window on the east wall, which frames a view of Sun Mountain, and two pairs of French doors that open onto a portal and small, landscaped patio on the north side. The high ceilings are embellished with small, hammered-and-pierced tin light fixtures. The massive, hand-carved table and chairs, which architect Doty patterned after drawings of early New Mexico furniture in the Palace of the Governors, were made by CCC crews using the architect's detailed drawings.



One of the hammered-and-pierced tin light fixtures in conference room

beginning to build the stone basement walls. Piles of soil in the pictures were used to make the adobe bricks. On the south wall, visible in the photo above at left, are images of Santa Fe and northern New Mexico created during the New Deal era under the Federal Arts Program.

In 2000, the conference room was named in honor of Herbert T. Maier, acting Southwest Region director from 1937 to 1940 and responsible for locating the new building in Santa Fe. As Maier wrote at the time: "The Southwest Region of the National Park Service now headquartered in Santa Fe is the only one based on cultural factors . . ."

One shows CCC workers laying the first course of adobe bricks on the stone foundations. Another depicts crews

5 Old Southwest Regional Director's Office



CCC-built trastero, with matching table and chairs



Kiva fireplace with historic andirons and fireplace screen

The offices on the second floor were designed to be used by the regional management team, and until the NPS reorganization in 1995, the first office at the top of the stairs was reserved for the regional director (RD). Since then it has either been left unoccupied for occasional visits by the Intermountain Region RD, or used by the building superintendent or other NPS officials.

Architectural details in this room include exposed vigas, deeply set double-hung windows with splayed jambs, hardwood floors, hand-made doors, and in one corner, a traditional southwestern *kiva* fireplace with a raised hearth.

Drawings indicate that Cecil Doty designed several pieces of furniture for this special room. But the only piece here today that was actually made by the CCC to his design is the *trastero* (cabinet). A historic photograph showing the cabinet being built is on display in the Maier Conference Room. The pair of wrought-iron andirons and an iron fireplace screen are the only other furnishings dating from the CCC era. Other pieces made later and inspired by the *trastero* include four armchairs, a conference table with eight matching chairs, a desk with matching credenza and bookcase, an end table, and a video cabinet—all in the same diamond-pattern motif and dark finish.

6 Great Room

Entered from the same hallway as the Maier Conference Room, the Great Room is a large space with a high ceiling supported by hand-hewn beams, oversized double-hung wooden windows, and a row of pine, corbel-topped columns running the length of the room. A hand-carved handrail and balustrade follows the steps down into the room from the hallway. Originally designed to house the "clerical pool," it has been filled over the years with systems furniture and work-space cubicles. It is now furnished with commercial tables and chairs as well as contemporary, "Santa Fe Style" wooden tables and chairs, making it a perfect place for large meetings and training sessions as well as informal gatherings and lunch breaks in winter.



Historic, CCC-crafted banco in Great Room

A couple of the historic, CCC-crafted bancos also are located here, distinguishable by their gray-washed color.

On the walls are a number of 1969 paintings and drawings by



The high ceiling supported by hand-hewn beams and corbel-topped columns extend the length of the Great Room

the NPS Neighborhood Youth Corps, an oil painting of the building by Steven Boone for its 50th anniversary, and several framed drawings by the building architect himself.

In the building's 2001 General Management Plan, this room was designated as a public space for meetings and exhibits to interpret the work of the CCC and the history of the Santa Fe Trail, whose 19th-century ruts run through the adjoining property.

7 Central Patio

When you stand in the patio area, you know you are at the very heart of the Old Santa Fe Trail Building. Its indoor-outdoor concept traces back centuries in Mediterranean architecture and, except for the landscaping, suggests a Southwest mission plaza.

Think of this space as a roofless room, surrounded by *portales* and offices. The *portales'* exposed *viga* ends of various lengths and rounded adobe walls capture the essence of the Spanish-Pueblo Revival architectural style. The *portal* is a visual transition from open space to building—from outdoors to indoors. Multi-paned office windows and doors around the patio have splendid views of this enclosed haven in the midst of a busy workplace.

The patio's focal point is a small, raised pond filled with goldfish. The pond and planter walls are completed with built-in adobe *bancos*.



Office windows and doors have splendid views of patio

The pond, old fruit trees, gardens and these convenient benches attract visitors and have made the patio an inviting place for employees during breaks, lunchtime and special gatherings.



The patio's focal point is a small, raised pond filled with goldfish

The old, narrow-leaf cottonwood tree in the pond's planter and the huge apricot tree in the southwest corner of the patio date to the initial construction period. Other fruit trees and plants have been added over the years.

Historically, the central patio was planted with many ornamental and exotic plant species as well as native plants. More recently, the Santa Fe Garden Club provided many years of dedicated care. Because historians have not been able to locate the original planting plan, the trend is toward plants that grow naturally in the Southwest and require the least possible watering. Future plans aim to rehabilitate the central patio to balance the historic design intent with sustainability.