



New Mexico Historic Preservation Division
Department of Cultural Affairs
www.nmhistoricpreservation.org



News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 15, 2015

CONTACT:

Tom Drake, 505-827-4067
Pete Warzel, 505-919-9016

St. John's New Mexico Campus Designated Historic

Santa Fe — The Santa Fe campus of nationally renowned St. John's College has been designated a state historic district in commemoration of its Southwestern architecture, unified curriculum based on the great works in the humanities and sciences, its art, and modernist landscaping that ties the school to its setting in the foothills of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains.

The New Mexico campus is celebrating its fiftieth anniversary. It is the sister campus to the much older and smaller, campus in Annapolis, Maryland, established as King William's School in 1696 and chartered by the state of Maryland in 1784 as St. Johns College. It is part of a National Historic Landmark. The setting and architecture of the 50-year-old New Mexico campus strongly contrast to the older school's Georgian-style and Neoclassical buildings set in leafy part of the city's downtown, although the school's educational missions are the same.

"This is the first time an entire college campus in New Mexico has been listed as an historic district," said Jeff Pappas, State Historic Preservation Officer and director of the New Mexico Historic Preservation Division. "The campus's modern adaptation of Territorial Revival-style architecture that follows a master plan developed in the early 1960s, it being sited in Santa Fe and the school's unique approach to higher education are historically significant."

HPD and the Historic Santa Fe Foundation, a nonprofit dedicated to protecting and promoting historic properties in the city, made the announcement jointly following a decision by the state Cultural Properties Review Committee to list the campus in the State Register of Cultural Properties. The committee forwarded the nomination to the National Register of Historic Places.

HSFF added the campus to its Register of Properties Worthy of Preservation, which acknowledges properties of historic worth in the Santa Fe area.

"St. John's College is associated with several persons prominent in Santa Fe's history," said Pete Warzel, HSFF executive director.

Leading New Mexico architect John Gaw Meem, who is credited with advancing the Territorial-Revival style in Santa Fe and eventually statewide in the 1930s, donated 260 acres for the campus. The historic district is 60 acres. He assisted Santa Fe architects Edward O. Holien and William R. Buckley in designing the campus and developing a master plan still followed for new construction. The historic period of the campus was set from 1964-1973.

Modernist landscape architect Garret Eckbo consulted with Meem on pedestrian traffic patterns and the placement of brownish hued concrete pathways. Boulders and smaller rocks were used in rock gardens and Eckbo, whose career spanned five decades and many projects in California and abroad, personally supervised placement of lichen-covered stones on the campus and chose native species of pine juniper and oak for plantings.

Santa Fe was chosen from 40 possible locations for St. John's second campus. The school's graduate degree program was founded at the Santa Fe campus and to this day the Eastern Studies graduate program is available only in Santa Fe. A growing student population was the primary reason the school wanted to establish a second educational institution.

The nomination was written by St. John's library director Jennifer Sprague and Steven Moffson, HPD's State and National Register coordinator.

Sprague said it was fascinating to learn about the national competition for what became the Santa Fe campus and the people who helped influence the decision to locate it here. They included Meem; Robert McKinney, then owner and publisher of the *Santa Fe New Mexican*; owner of the Forked Lightning Ranch in nearby Pecos, E.E. Fogelson who married actress Greer Garson; and Alexander Girard, who designed the interior of the 1964 Peterson Student Center. The center is notable for the wood-panel doors, furnishings and large mural Girard designed to reflect the school's mission.

"The seven disciplines of the liberal arts are represented on the mural in squares and rectangles illustrated with symbols, names and mathematical formulas," Moffson said. "The mural is historically significant to the campus and reflects the school's curriculum, which is based on the Great Books."

The historic district includes 26 buildings; the landscaping, including a fish pond and grassy knoll where students gather; and the mural.

— 30 —

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

State of New Mexico
Historic Preservation Division,
Department of Cultural Affairs
Tom Drake
407 Galisteo Street, Suite 236
Santa Fe, New Mexico 87501

Historic Santa Fe Foundation
Pete Warzel
545 Canyon Rd. #2
Santa Fe, NM 87501