

House of the spirits

By Laura Beach

Fig. 1. The current owners, Dr. Karl L. and Susan Horn, have interpreted the Roque Lobato house to the era of Sylvanus Morley (1883–1948), who restored and remodeled it at the turn of the twentieth century. Morley expanded the living room and, in keeping with prevailing arts and crafts taste, furnished it with Mission furniture. William Penhallow Henderson (1877–1943) made the trestle table, far left, and two end tables in the mid-1920s. The nineteenth-century corner cupboard at the far right descended in the Indiana family of Susan Horn. Above the fireplace hangs a tin cross with reverse-painted glass decoration dating to New Mexico's Territorial period (1850–1912) flanked by two Hispanic New Mexico revival style crosses of tin, glass, and wallpaper made in the early twentieth century by Santa Fe tinsmith Francisco Sandoval (1860–1944). *Photograph by Robert Reck.*

Several centuries of regional art and architecture come together in Santa Fe's Roque Lobato house

In time, Sylvanus Griswold Morley would be known as the brilliant Mayanist who excavated Chichén Itzá and, controversially, as Agent 53, a scientist who used his Central American fieldwork as a cover for spying on behalf of the Office of Naval Intelligence during World War I.¹ But in 1910 the young Harvard-trained archaeologist whose interest in the ancient Southwest brought him to the New Mexico Territory in the summer of 1907, was about to leave his indelible mark on his adopted hometown of Santa Fe, whose low-slung, mud-brown silhouette owes much to

his articulation of what he called the Santa Fe style and others more accurately term the “Spanish Pueblo revival.” Morley helped accomplish this transformation through his recommendations to the first Santa Fe City Planning Board in 1912 and his vigorous renovation of the Roque Lobato house, work that served as a template for the restoration of Santa Fe's foremost landmark, the Palace of the Governors.

Three blocks north of Santa Fe's plaza, on what was once the town's defensive perimeter, the house Morley acquired in 1910 and lived in



Fig. 2. Morley added the rear portal, pergola, and courtyard, installing an elaborately carved Spanish colonial beam and corbels salvaged from a house on nearby Arroyo Tenorio Street. The Horns asked carver Sergio Tapia to re-create the corbels after discovering that the originals were no longer sound. Morley's carved beam, which dates to the seventeenth or eighteenth century, remains in place. *Reck photograph.*

intermittently during the next decade was probably built in 1785 by Roque Lobato, armorer to the Royal Garrison of Santa Fe, then an outpost of the Spanish crown. Documented by Chris Wilson and Oliver Horn in their forthcoming book, *The Roque Lobato House*, the residence is one of Santa Fe's most significant.

"It is absolutely central to two major currents of the history of the city," says Wilson, a professor of cultural landscape studies at the University of New Mexico, who locates twentieth-century Santa Fe within a national antiquarian movement in his groundbreaking book *The Myth of Santa Fe: Creating a Modern Regional Tradition*.² As originally configured, the Lobato house—U-shaped with a south-facing portal, five or six rooms, and walls of adobe—was

couple's deep interest in the house prompted them to delve into its past with their son, Oliver, a doctoral candidate in U.S. diplomatic history at Georgetown University.

Originally from Texas, Dr. Horn met his wife, who grew up in Indiana, in San Francisco, where he completed his medical training. He bought his first pieces of southwestern Indian pottery on childhood trips to New Mexico and, eager to return to the state, opened a practice in Albuquerque in 1985.

Soon after they settled in Albuquerque, the couple began working with Santa Fe dealer Nathaniel O. Owings to build a representative collection of New Mexican art and artifacts, from prehistory to the present. One of their first purchases was *Madonna of*

Fig. 3. The Territorial style brick coping was added sometime prior to 1965. The original house probably had few if any windows. *Reck photograph.*



typical for a well-to-do family of the late Spanish colonial era, he says. As restored and remodeled by Morley between 1910 and 1912, it reflected Santa Fe's new historicist direction, its large public rooms and rear courtyard with attached pergola an indigenous expression of arts and crafts taste. Caught up in the era's antiquarian fever, Morley salvaged a beam, post, and corbel brackets from a house on nearby Arroyo Tenorio Street, incorporating the extravagantly carved seventeenth- or eighteenth-century architectural fragments into his new rear portal.

Today, the Lobato house belongs to Dr. Karl L. Horn and his wife, Susan, who, after purchasing the dwelling in 2004, restored it to Morley's era and now use it as their primary residence. The

the Junipers (Fig. 7), a vivid 1925 oil painting that is among the best works by William Penhallow Henderson, who, with his wife, the poet, writer and critic Alice Corbin, was a prominent member of Santa Fe's early twentieth-century art colony.

Massachusetts-born and Boston-trained, Henderson was an established painter and an instructor at the Chicago Academy of Fine Arts when, in 1905, he married Corbin, who from 1912 to 1922 was an associate editor of *Poetry* magazine, a leading journal of progressive verse that promoted such talents as Vachel Lindsay, Robert Frost, and Carl Sandburg, all friends of the couple. In 1914 Frank Lloyd Wright engaged Henderson and fellow artist John Norton to paint murals for Chicago's Midway Gardens.



Fig. 4. In the front hall, straw and pine needles were used to simulate the appearance of costly inlays on painted pine crosses made in northern New Mexico in the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century. The painted pine chest is also from northern New Mexico and dates to the late nineteenth century. The tin scone of c. 2008 is by Santa Fe craftsman Maurice Dixon. *Reck photograph.*

Fig. 5. The living room wainscoting was a Morley addition. W. P. Henderson made the pine table and armchairs carved with stylized Native American motifs in the 1920s. The early twentieth-century New Mexican pine candelabrum is from a Penitente morada, or meetinghouse. The Horns also own two of Henderson's original illustrations (not pictured) for the 1937 book *Brothers of Light: The Penitentes of the Southwest* by his wife Alice Corbin (1881–1949), as well as, top right, the dry-point and aquatint *Penitente Fires* by Gene Kloss (1903–1996), 1939, from an edition of fifty. On the table are *Indigo*, a bronze maquette by Paul Moore (1957–), 1995, and a platter and bowl by Navajo ceramist Kathleen Nez (1954–2011). Reck photograph.



The Horns worked with Santa Fe dealer Nathaniel O. Owings to build a representative collection of New Mexican art and artifacts from prehistory to the present

Fig. 6. *The Voice of the Water (The Spring Flute Ceremony)* by Will Shuster (1893–1969), 1934. Watercolor on paper, 12 by 8 1/4 inches. This is one of two preliminary studies in the collection for a series of frescoes in the courtyard of what is now the New Mexico Museum of Art, completed in 1934 by Shuster, a founding member of Los Cinco Pintores, Santa Fe's first modernist art group. Shuster's other study in the Horn collection is *The Voice of the Earth (The Basket Dance)*. Photograph by James Hart.

Wright, not satisfied with the result, destroyed the work and Henderson was never paid. More bad news followed. In 1916 the couple decamped to Santa Fe to seek treatment for Alice, who had been diagnosed with tuberculosis.

As explored by Judith A. Barter, the Art Institute of Chicago's Field-McCormick Curator of American Art, with Andrew J. Walker in the 2003 exhibition and catalogue *Window on the West: Chicago and the Art of the New Frontier, 1890–1940*, the bohemian enclaves of Santa Fe and Taos held particular fascination for Chicago artists. New Mexico was a place where modernism and primitivism comfortably coexisted. Corbin suggested as much in her 1920 book *Red Earth: Poems of New Mexico*, in which she saw, as Georgia O'Keeffe did, beyond "the fierce modern music of rivets and hammers and trams" to the desert—still, encompassing and eternal.⁴

"The railroad," Nat Owings says simply when asked what brought Chicagoans to Santa Fe. The dealer's Illinois-born mother, Emily Otis Barnes, daughter of Chicago banker Joseph E. Otis, a direc-



tor of the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railway Company, first visited writer Raymond Otis, her brother, in Santa Fe in 1927. She later had a ranch in Jacona, New Mexico, with the dealer's father, architect Nathaniel A. Owings, who in 1936 founded Chicago-based Skidmore, Owings and Merrill with his brother-in-law Louis Skidmore. As far back as Nat Owings can remember, the Henderson and Owings families were friends. After the Hendersons' only child, Alice Oliver Henderson Evans Rossin Colquitt, died in 1988, Owings Gallery was asked to represent the estate.

The Horns' interest in W. P. Henderson prompted them to gather not only paintings and drawings by the artist but a representative selection of his furniture as well. Their choice is broadly in keeping with Morley's stated preference for Mission furniture, which the archaeologist admired for its simplicity, and has led the couple to study Henderson in depth. As Dr. Horn relates in *An American Journey: The Art of William P. Henderson and William P. Henderson By Descent: The Brown Collection*, published by Owings Gallery in 2010 and 2013, respectively, to accompany exhibitions of the artist's work, Henderson, notwithstanding his national reputation, found it difficult to support himself in Santa Fe by painting alone. Perhaps influenced by Wright, he began experimenting with architecture and furniture making, building himself a studio and a house on Santa Fe's Camino del Monte Sol between

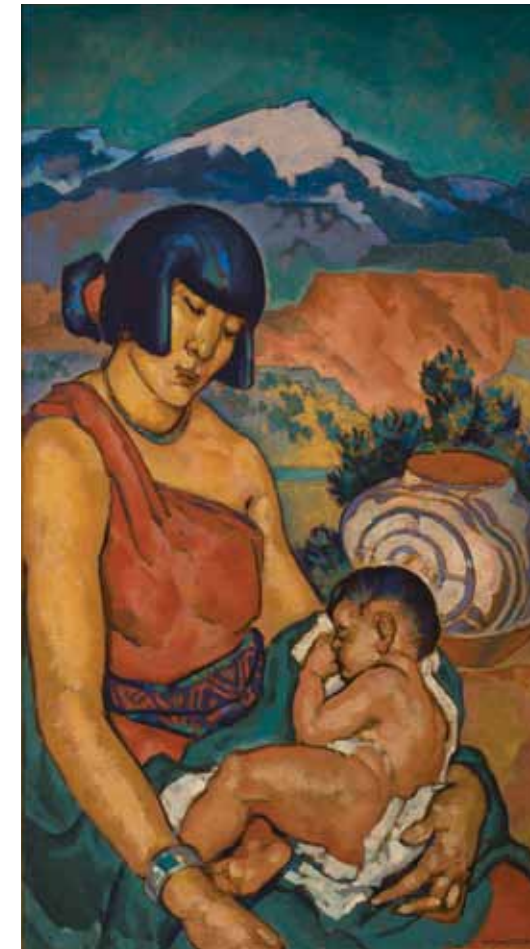


Fig. 7. *Madonna of the Junipers* by Henderson, 1925. Oil on artist's board, 34 1/4 by 19 3/8 inches. Hart photograph.

Fig. 8. In the living room, *Road to Chimayo* by Karl Albert (1911–2007), 1985, hangs above a nineteenth-century Mexican pine table. On the table is a collection of New Mexican *bultos*, or carved and painted figures of saints, by, from the left, José Rafael Aragón (active 1820–1862), José Benito Ortega (1858–

1941), José Aragón (active 1820–1835), the so-called A. J. Santerò (active 1820–1840), and Antonio Molleno (active 1815–1845). The tulipwood table top is by Matt and Philip Moulthrop, 2009. On it is a late eighteenth- or early nineteenth-century carved and painted figure of *Cristo* from New Mexico. Reck photograph.

Fig. 9. The Horns commissioned Sergio Tapia to make the dining-room sideboard and table in the manner of

W. P. Henderson. Above the former hangs *Winter Scene Still Life*, an oil by B. J. O. Nordfeldt (1878–1955), 1936–1937. On the far wall is Henderson's *Madonna of the Junipers*. The Horns commissioned Maurice Dixon, coauthor of *New Mexico Tinwork, 1840–1940*, to make the punched-tin and reverse-painted chandelier and sconce. The wrought-iron candelabrum in the corner is by contemporary craftswoman Jan Barbooglio. Reck photograph.

Fig. 10. *Feast Day, San Juan* by Howard N. Cook (1901–1980), c. 1935. Signed “Howard Cook” at lower center. Graphite, gesso, and oil on board, 12 by 16 ½ inches. Hart photograph.



Fig. 11. *Nuestra Señora de Delores (Our Lady of Sorrows)*, an oil on wood by the so-called Eighteenth-Century Novice (active c. 1780), who worked in northern New Mexico, is placed in a niche in the front hallway; it was formerly in the collection of the poet and writer Witter Bynner. Hart photograph.



Fig. 13. *Landscape, New Mexico* by Andrew Dasburg (1887–1979), c. 1924. Signed “Dasburg” at lower left. Oil on artist’s board, 12 by 15 ½ inches. Hart photograph.

Fig. 14. Palhik Mana (butterfly maiden) kachina, Hopi, Arizona, 1930s. Painted wood; height 17, width 11 inches. Hart photograph.

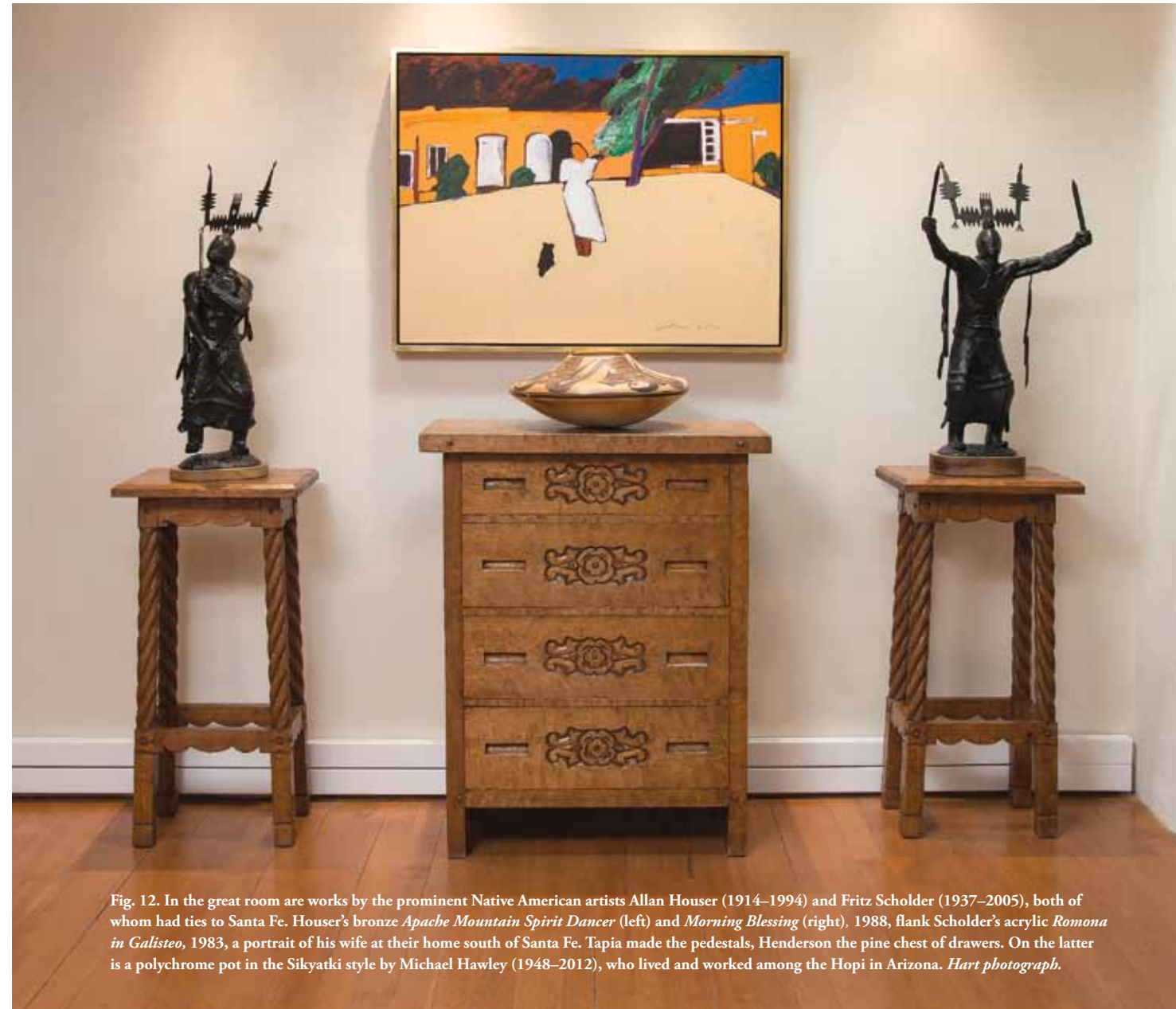


Fig. 12. In the great room are works by the prominent Native American artists Allan Houser (1914–1994) and Fritz Scholder (1937–2005), both of whom had ties to Santa Fe. Houser’s bronze *Apache Mountain Spirit Dancer* (left) and *Morning Blessing* (right), 1988, flank Scholder’s acrylic *Romona in Galisteo*, 1983, a portrait of his wife at their home south of Santa Fe. Tapia made the pedestals, Henderson the pine chest of drawers. On the latter is a polychrome pot in the Sikyatki style by Michael Hawley (1948–2012), who lived and worked among the Hopi in Arizona. Hart photograph.

1919 and 1924. He was a minor shareholder in the Flying Heart Development Company, established in 1923 with his first son-in-law, John Evans, the only child of Taos doyenne Mabel Dodge Luhan, and in 1925 co-founded the Pueblo Spanish Building Company. Henderson’s most notable architectural commissions over the next decade included the sprawling Santa Fe compound El Delirio, built for the heiresses Amelia Elizabeth White and her sister Martha, now the School for Advanced Research; the restoration of the downtown commercial complex Sena Plaza; and the original design for what became the

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Wheelwright Museum of the American Indian.

Henderson was far from the only Anglo craftsman producing historicist furniture in New Mexico in the first decades of the twentieth century, though he does seem to be the only one commercially marketing his work. He was preceded in the 1910s and 1920s by Jesse L. Nusbaum and Samuel F. Hudelson, who made furniture for the Museum of New Mexico. B.J.O. Nordfeldt, a painter friend of Henderson’s from his Chicago days, also made furniture, as did the artists Fremont Ellis, Józef Bakós, Carlos Viera, Nicolai Fechin, and the architect Trent Thomas. New Deal programs encouraged the revival of traditional handicrafts, including furniture making, by Hispanic craftsmen, whose products were sold at guild shops in the 1930s.⁵

Henderson’s furniture business flourished until the Depression, finally dissolving in 1937. In July 1928

Alice Corbin described her husband’s enterprise to readers of *House and Garden*, explaining, “Of late years the marked renaissance of adobe architecture in New Mexico has occasioned a need of Spanish type furniture in keeping with this simple and elemental architecture; and, the supply of early originals being limited, this need has been met by the creation of modern furniture based on the old traditions.”⁶

Though clearly infused with an arts and crafts sensibility, Henderson’s inventive designs were inspired by what he saw around him. Working alone and with assistants, in particular his shop foreman Gregorio Gabaldón, he crafted a wide range of forms, both Hispanic and Anglo, from *bancos* and *trasteros* to his own version of lowboys and library bookstands (see Figs. 5, 12, 15). Using pre-milled local pine, he secured the carved components with mortise joints and oak pins, then stained, waxed, and sometimes painted the assembled furniture.

What most distinguishes Henderson’s furniture is its carving. Textured overall, his surfaces ripple in the light, calling to mind hammered copper. He created surface pattern by pulling a draw knife diagonally across a flat plane. Minor variations from one piece of furniture to the next suggest that more than one carver was at work. Dr. Horn believes that Gabaldón probably carved the most elaborate panels. The overall effect of the carving was to soften the appearance of large pieces that might otherwise seem bulky.

Many of Henderson’s chairs and tables have rope-carved posts and stretchers. On case pieces, panels are decorated with motifs that fall into two general





Fig. 15. Tapia built the library cabinets and shelves to house the Horns' collection of pre-historic pottery, much of which is Ancestral Puebloan from the Four Corners region near Mesa Verde National Park in Colorado. Henderson made the pine library table and chairs (one of a pair) c. 1928. Hart photograph.

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categories, Spanish florals and Pueblo geometrics. Panels frequently center a four-lobed flower that has come to be called the Henderson rose.

"When little Alice died I ended up with more Henderson furniture in one place than anyone had ever seen. Over the years I have continued to present it," says Owings, who between July 18 and September 1 will exhibit a suite of furniture, including a davenport and a rare desk, made in 1927 for E.B. Chenoweth, an S.S. Kresge executive, who commissioned it for his cottage in northern Michigan. Henderson furniture turns up in every corner of the country. Simple pieces such as side tables and stools are relatively common. Couches and daybeds are rare.

For Christmas one year, Nat Owings gave Henderson's chisels to Sergio Tapia, a gifted sculptor whose work Owings Gallery has featured in three solo shows. Owings says, "Sergio has a deep, deep talent for ma-

terials. He can take a piece of wood and make come out of it what is living in it." Sergio and his father, Luis, are well-known carvers in New Mexico's centuries-old *santero* tradition, though, unlike saint makers of the past, Sergio explores religious themes and iconography through the lens of contemporary politics and society. "As a Hispanic in New Mexico I feel a certain obligation to voice my views," he explains.

Having also worked as a conservator of wooden artifacts, Tapia has been asked by the Horns and others to make furniture in the manner of Henderson to fill gaps in their collections. For the dining room of the Lobato house, he crafted a table and heavily carved sideboard (see Fig. 9). He spent the better part of six months fashioning the Horns' library (Fig. 13), which houses their collection of Ancestral Puebloan pottery, and reproduced Morley's relief-carved corbels on the rear porch (see Fig. 2), deemed too fragile centuries

after they were made to continue bearing weight. "I have conserved more than a hundred pieces of Henderson furniture and have dozens of his patterns," says Tapia, whose own furniture is lighter and more refined than that of his predecessor and more responsive to Mexican and Spanish prototypes, particularly in its construction details. It fascinates Tapia that Henderson used decorative elements on his furniture as a painter would, not necessarily centering them but positioning them to make one's eye travel.

"Buildings that live, change. It's the layers of change that are exciting, valuable and important," Chris Wilson says. Sylvanus Morley took the dilapidated Lobato house and adapted it for modern living, embroidering on its essential elements in a way typical of his time. Nearly a century later, the Horns rehabilitated the house in a manner sensitive to Morley's vision, refurbishing historic materials but adding contemporary amenities. Preservation and adaptation, tradition and innovation. Such carefully calibrated balance makes the Lobato house a fair representation of Santa Fe itself. The city of junctions and arrivals, as the Pulitzer Prize-winning historian Paul Horgan put it, is a place where the past is fertile material for an imaginatively realized present.

¹ For information on Morley, see Jason S. Shapiro, "Sylvanus Griswold Morley: A Life in Archaeology and Elsewhere," *El Palacio*, vol. 118, no. 3 (Fall 2013), pp. 56–65. ² Wilson has uncovered ties between Morley's employer, Edgar Lee Hewett (1865–1946), first director of the Museum of New Mexico, which he founded in 1909, and William Sumner Appleton (1874–1947), who founded the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities one year later. Wilson argues that Morley's restoration of the Lobato house can be viewed as "a transplantation of SPNEA's preservation campaign to the Southwest." See Chris Wilson, draft manuscript, "The Most Historic House in Santa Fe," *The Roque Lobato House*, p. 6, and Wilson, *The Myth of Santa Fe* (University of New Mexico Press, Albuquerque, 1997), p. 367. ³ Sylvanus Morley, "Santa Fe Architecture," *Old Santa Fe*, no. 3 (January 1915), pp. 278–288. ⁴ Alice Corbin, *Red Earth: Poems of New Mexico* (1920; Museum of New Mexico Press, Santa Fe, 2003), p. 37. ⁵ For a discussion of the furniture of Jesse Nusbaum and Sam Hudelson, see Penelope Hunter-Stiebel, "Furnishing The Santa Fe Style: An Investigation in Two Parts," *El Palacio*, vol. 118, no. 1 (Spring 2013), pp. 32–51; and, on WPA era furniture, Tey Mariana Nunn, *Sin Nombre: Hispana and Hispano Artists of the New Deal Era* (University of New Mexico Press, Albuquerque, 2001). For an overview of furniture making in New Mexico in the first half of the twentieth century, see Lonny Taylor and Dessa Bokides, *New Mexican Furniture 1600–1940: The Origins, Survival, and Revival of Furniture Making in the Hispanic Southwest* (Museum of New Mexico Press, Santa Fe, 1987), pp. 215–240. ⁶ Alice Corbin, "Furniture for Colonial Spanish Homes," *House and Garden*, vol. 54, no. 1 (July 1928), p. 62.

Fig. 16. In a guest room, applied moldings and colorful paint enliven two simple chests, both probably from northern New Mexico and dating from the state's Territorial period. The red and green one (on the right) is illustrated in Lonny Taylor and Dessa Bokides's *New Mexican Furniture 1600–1940: The Origins, Survival, and Revival of Furniture Making in the Hispanic Southwest*. It sits on a new stand made by Tapia. The blue wardrobe dates from the mid-1980s. Reck photograph.

Fig. 17. In another guest room, *Summer Quiet* by Lloyd Moylan (1893–1963), c. 1932, hangs above the bronze *Procession* by Ed Mell (1942–), 2007. Reck photograph.

