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The University of New Mexico's Zimmerman Library A New Deal landmark articulates the ideals of the pwa

Audra Bellmore

n 1933, at the height of the Great Depression, when nearly one-fourth of the population was unemployed, the administration of Pres. Franklin D. Roosevelt initiated the New Deal, a platform of social welfare and public works programs designed to assist struggling Americans and put them back to work.¹ Numerous brick-and-mortar construction projects made a lasting impact on the built environment of the United States and especially of New Mexico, a state with inadequate public buildings. The New Deal had an extraordinary effect on New Mexico's material landscape. The Public Works Administration (PWA) financed 295 major projects throughout the state, including courthouses in Las Cruces, Santa Fe, and Portales.² During a time of economic decline and unlikely growth, the PWA funded eight buildings on the campus of the University of New Mexico (UNM) alone.³

One building in particular has become a symbol for the state and a cultural and architectural icon of significant proportions. Zimmerman Library, which celebrates its seventy-fifth anniversary in 2013, exemplifies the character of PWA construction across the country by articulating some of its basic principles: regionalism, cultural pluralism, and modernity. The library's architect, John Gaw Meem, said that its Spanish-Pueblo style captured the "regional expression of modern contemporary practice."⁴ It represented the New Deal's broader aspiration to celebrate the "American scene" and the diversity of the American

123

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landscape by focusing on regional life, culture, and community in various forms of art, including architecture, mural painting, photography, music, and literature. The Zimmerman Library project also employed hundreds of local craftsmen, among them Native and Hispano artisans, helping those in need and making an important cultural imprint on the built environment. Structurally, Zimmerman adhered to the PWA goal of improving and modernizing the country's worn and inadequate education facilities. Meem used up-to-date construction techniques and building materials, contributing to the health and safety of an expanding student population. Like many of the PWA-funded buildings across the country, Zimmerman Library has stood the test of time, growing along with the needs of the university, serving as a gathering place for students, and remaining the heart of a vital campus.

A New Deal in America

In response to the economic crisis of the 1930s, the Roosevelt administration devised an armory of federally funded and managed programs that provided relief and jobs for the unemployed and addressed the human needs of a despairing population.⁵ Between 1933 and 1943, in an unprecedented effort to alleviate joblessness and destitution in the United States, a variety of New Deal programs and projects created millions of jobs, including professional, clerical, and arts-related employment. The major thrust occurred in the construction and excavation sector. The New Deal's construction boom was a two-fold victory for the country: it not only created meaningful employment but also provided the United States with new infrastructure, a park system, and major buildings in every state. The legacy of the New Deal construction programs is monumental and still largely standing. In the words of PWA chroniclers C. W. Short and R. Stanley Brown, "Perhaps future generations will classify these years as one of the epoch-making periods of advancement in the civilization not only of our own country but also of the human race."6 No movement or program had a greater impact on the built environment of the United States than the New Deal during the approximately ten-year period known as the Great Depression.

Some of the many programs created under the New Deal platform were short-lived and little known. Others, such as the Works Progress Administration (WPA), were extensive and so well known that they became catchalls for nearly all New Deal work. A group of agencies stood out as the main administrators of a vast and powerful federally funded building program.

In May 1933, the Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA) became the first relief operation developed under Roosevelt's New Deal.

BELLMORE ⇒125

Operating until 1935, FERA gave grants to states to manage relief programs with the specific intent of relieving unemployment by creating jobs in local and state governments. The Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), another early New Deal program, ran from 1933 to 1942 and provided manual labor jobs to unemployed men ages 18–25 (later 17–28). In addition to employing approximately three million young men, the CCC initiated a natural resources conservation program in the United States. It reforested America by planting 2.4 billion trees and built eight hundred state parks, the nucleus for today's state park system. The CCC also constructed public roadways that connected cities across the country.⁷

The Civil Works Administration (CWA), a program created under FERA in November 1933 that ended in March 1934, provided four hundred million dollars in short-term funds to increase benefits and get people to work, mainly in construction jobs improving or erecting buildings and bridges. The broadest, largest, and most widely recognized of the New Deal agencies—the WPA—controlled small-scale building projects and ran programs in literacy and the arts, and for youth and women. The WPA hired unemployed workers on relief and paid them directly with federal funds. Operating from 1936 to 1939, the WPA provided seven billion dollars of relief throughout the country, especially helping rural and western U.S. populations.⁸

The PWA, a massive New Deal program administered by the secretary of the interior, Harold Ickes, focused on large-scale public construction projects. The PWA spent over six billion dollars between 1933 and 1941 on more than thirty-four thousand projects, including bridges, hydroelectric dams, tunnels, canals, streets, highways, airports, schools, courthouses, hospitals, and universities. The Triborough Bridge and the Lincoln Tunnel in New York, the Grand Coulee Dam in Washington, and the Key West Highway in Florida were all PWA projects. The PWA was supposed to lower unemployment while providing major public infrastructure throughout the country.⁹ Unlike the WPA, which paid workers directly, the PWA awarded government contracts to qualified private firms through a bid system. These firms then hired their own workers. The PWA funded the construction of buildings and sites for federal use as well as non-federal municipal sites, such as state and local governmental buildings or public schools. The non-federal PWA projects required local sponsors, who initiated the application process, supplied engineering and architectural specifications, and provided oversight of the project from beginning to end. A PWA inspector verified that the project fulfilled its funding guidelines. The PWA acted much like a bank or large building and loan association. Far more than many other New Deal programs, PWA projects granted communities a measure of control over their own sites, enabling them to address their own particular requirements. The details of school buildings, for example, were left to local school officials, who would know best what facilities were required to suit their districts' needs. The PWA allowed schools to plan their projects as it supplied the funds to create improved and modern facilities.¹⁰

The New Deal in New Mexico

Even in the thriving years of 1928 and 1929, New Mexico ranked among the poorest states in the United States. The state's main economic sectors were small farming and mining of coal and metal. Less than 3 percent of the arid land was farmable, however, and all farms were subject to indeterminate weather conditions. During the Dust Bowl years of the 1930s, agriculture literally dried up in the American West, putting small farmers out of business in New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas. New Mexican farmers were unable to pay their taxes and were subject to foreclosures. Additionally, the stock market crash of 1929 severely reduced industrial demand for raw materials, triggering an unemployment crisis in New Mexico's mining industries. Lacking unemployment insurance, transients from all over New Mexico and neighboring states converged on Albuquerque, the state's largest city and the most promising site for employment. By 1931/1932, the suffering in the state had reached calamitous proportions.¹¹

Between 1933 and 1943, public works projects administered by the CWA, CCC, WPA, and PWA carried out construction, engineering, landscaping, and arts projects throughout New Mexico. According to historian Charles Biebel, these projects significantly impacted the material landscape of a state "where there was little to begin with."¹² Public buildings such as schools, courthouses, jails, city halls, post offices, libraries, and hospitals were built in almost every town in the state. In the larger communities, state colleges and universities received funds for major building projects that greatly enhanced the presence and accessibility of the state's higher education system, particularly in its many far-flung rural settlements.¹³

Although it was a short-lived program, the CWA had a significant longterm impact on New Mexico, constructing some of the first parks in the state. The CCC built roads, sidewalks, sewers, water systems, bridges, and power plants in almost every New Mexico community and created parks that significantly broadened public access to open spaces, recreational areas, and other landscapes. The WPA administered the largest New Deal program in New Mexico, undertaking nearly four thousand projects. It funded engineering and construction projects; welfare programs; and service initiatives in the arts, education, writing, research, and documentation. Two of its service projects were the WPA Artist Project, which financed mural painting in public buildings in New Mexico, and the Historic American Building Survey, which created measured drawings of early New Mexican buildings for inclusion in the Library of Congress.

Most of New Mexico's large-scale capital improvements in the 1930s originated in the distribution of PWA funds to local governments, institutions, and nonprofit organizations. In an effort to push forward the dispersal of non-federal PWA funds to the states, governor-elect Clyde Tingley endorsed legislation in December 1934 that made it possible for public bodies in New Mexico to sell self-liquidating bonds to the federal and state governments that could be secured and eventually repaid with estimated future revenues from the proposed construction projects. State universities, for example, used the estimated revenues from student room and board fees to obtain loans for the construction of campus dormitories. Similarly, municipalities employed the estimated revenues from the sale of water to negotiate loans for the construction of new water and sewage plants.¹⁴

From 1933 to July 1943, the PWA maintained seven regional field offices located in New York, Chicago, Atlanta, Omaha, Fort Worth, San Francisco, and Portland. Each one administered a numbered region. New Mexico, Louisiana, Oklahoma, Arkansas, Texas, Colorado, and Kansas fell within Region No. 5. Native architectural styles varied more widely in Region No. 5 than they did in any other region. Spanish and French traditions appear throughout Texas and Louisiana. Kansas, Oklahoma, Arkansas, and Colorado exhibit a midwestern influence. The Spanish-Pueblo style prevails in New Mexico. In Region No. 5, climate was the controlling factor in form, construction, and materials, with conditions ranging from semitropical on the Gulf of Mexico to severely cold in mountainous areas. Louisiana buildings with a southern orientation took advantage of gulf breezes, while the small windows and thick walls of New Mexico pueblos protected against the heat.¹⁵

Building materials in Region No. 5 also reflected local conditions. The availability of clay, brick, and cement influenced the design of PWA projects in New Mexico, where builders used steel framing and reinforced concrete floors as well as covered brick or hollow-tile walls with stucco finish. In some cases, the walls consisted of traditional New Mexican adobe brick, plastered inside and out.¹⁶ Builders usually made roofs out of concrete slabs on steel, covering them with ceramic tile when employing the sloping roof of the Spanish Mission style.

Some fine examples of the PWA-funded projects built in Santa Fe are the Territorial Revival style municipal building (1937), the Spanish-Pueblo Revival

style administration and classroom building for the New Mexico Asylum for the Deaf (1936), the supreme court building (1937), and the junior high school (1938). In Taos the PWA built the Pueblo-style high school (1935). PWA assistance funded the construction of the Spanish-style junior high school (1936) in Clovis and two reinforced concrete courthouses in Las Cruces and Portales (1938 and 1939, respectively). The U.S. Forest Service constructed major PWA-funded park structures, including the truss-type Rustic Bridge in the Santa Fe National Forest and the Canjilon Ranger Station (1935) in the Carson National Forest.¹⁷

The PWA and Educational Buildings

The influence of the PWA on education in the United States is undeniable. During the first two decades of the twentieth century, American students were frequently housed in inadequate, unsanitary, and undersized buildings. States and municipalities were unable to cope with the burgeoning student population. From 1922 to 1928, the federal government increased educational spending to meet the need for new school buildings. The average federal capital expenditure during this time was \$15.27 per student. During the initial years of the Depression, outlays fell dramatically from \$14.44 in 1930 to \$2.24 in 1934. Through the PWA, capital outlays grew to an average of \$8.80 per pupil for the years 1934–1938. Although this figure was still only about three-fifths of the average at the height of the 1920s building period, the PWA fueled a remarkable increase in school construction across the United States. A survey by the Department of Education conducted in May 1939 revealed that the PWA had helped finance 1,965 completed school buildings distributed across forty-eight states. Notably, 47 percent of the new structures were in communities with populations of fewer than twenty-five thousand residents, satisfying a great need for educational infrastructure in small cities, towns, and rural areas that had lacked adequate capital funding for years.¹⁸

Besides dramatically enhancing the number of American school buildings, PWA construction addressed another pressing problem: the modernization of the educational infrastructure. Small schools, including one-room schoolhouses, were consolidated into larger, more efficient administrative units. Centralized units allowed school programs to keep pace with the educational needs of children, particularly in rural areas, and enabled state boards of education to conduct long-range planning more efficiently. States saved money by eliminating unnecessary schools and staff in favor of central locations.¹⁹

New construction also helped standardize modern building systems. A study by the Federal Office of Education in 1939 showed that even with the

BELLMORE →129

PWA improvements, 39 percent of all U.S. school buildings were still more than thirty years old and had not kept pace with new technologies in building construction. Replacing old, uncomfortable, and unsanitary buildings, PWA structures had efficient and modern electrical, lighting, heating, ventilation, and sanitation systems. The PWA installed new air conditioning systems in public buildings such as schools, courthouses, and hospitals, particularly in the South. As Short and Brown note, "This treatment and cooling of air is a great advance in the art of living."²⁰ It also replaced fire hazards with new fireproof buildings and devised fire-alarm and sprinkler systems based on the standards of the National Fire Protection Association and the building codes of the National Board of Underwriters. The PWA funded the fireproofing of 47 percent of the 1,965 new school buildings and additions.²¹

Finally, the new buildings provided facilities for a more modern and wellrounded educational curriculum and programming. New school systems generally offered courses in science, fine art, industrial art, music, theater, health, and recreation. The inclusion of auditoriums, gymnasiums, laboratories, music rooms, art rooms, home-economics laboratories, wood and metal shops, and libraries in American school buildings contributed greatly to the development of and access to modern school programming.

In New Mexico, state, county, and municipal governments launched an array of educational construction with New Deal public assistance. Over nine hundred school districts relied on property taxes for building and maintenance. Public revenues plummeted in the grip of the Depression, and public schools were in dire need of funding. The PWA built schools in small towns and cities throughout the state. In Albuquerque, new school buildings included the Lew Wallace Elementary School, the Coronado Elementary School, and additions to the Albuquerque High School (classrooms, administrative space, a gymnasium, and a library).²² These new buildings addressed the needs of a growing population as workers migrated from small towns to Albuquerque and other larger cities to fill urban wage-labor jobs provided by New Deal subsidies.

The New Deal also funded higher education building projects to meet the needs of the state's expanding population. A UNM study from 1 August 1935 argued for the construction of additional buildings to care for the university's expanding educational program.²³ Student enrollment at UNM had increased from 273 in the 1923/1924 academic year to 1,209 in the 1934/1935 school year.²⁴ The university's infrastructure—classrooms, dormitories, and offices—had failed to keep pace.

PWA and WPA funds built college and university buildings across the state. In Portales the WPA financed four buildings on the campus of Eastern New

Mexico University, including an administration building, a museum, and two halls that together formed the nucleus of its campus. In Socorro County, the WPA funded several buildings on the campus of the New Mexico Institute of Mining and Technology. Similarly, the WPA funded buildings on the campus of Northern New Mexico University in Española. The PWA-funded building for the New Mexico Asylum for the Deaf and Dumb in Santa Fe enabled vocational training for its students.²⁵

In New Mexico, the work of the PWA in higher education appears most clearly on the UNM campus. PWA funding arrived slowly to Albuquerque City Hall because of legal limitations on municipal borrowing. UNM, however, had no such restrictions, so it was able to apply quickly for a nine thousand dollar PWA grant matched by twenty-five thousand dollars in appropriations by the state legislature in 1933. The funding enabled the construction of new physical education facilities in the school's stadium building, including handball courts, locker rooms, showers, educational classrooms, and offices.²⁶

The first large-scale PWA building project on the UNM campus was the construction of a new administration and laboratory building, Scholes Hall. The university obtained \$250,000 to fund the construction. After the completion of the Scholes Hall project in 1935, the university regents lobbied the PWA for an expanded building program that would include several new campus buildings and the remodeling of some existing ones. The PWA covered 45 percent of the proposed building costs, while the rest of the financing came from thirty-year government bonds. As architectural historian Bainbridge Bunting concludes, "This seemed like a dream for a small school such as the University of New Mexico, which could barely find money to pay its faculty." Federal funds allowed UNM to mount a much more ambitious building agenda than it otherwise could have at this time. Thanks to PWA funding, UNM was able to grow substantially in size and enrollment during a time of distressing economic decline for the country as a whole.²⁷

New Deal programs including FERA, the CWA, and the PWA financed buildings at the University of New Mexico that marked a new era in construction and design on the campus. Between 1934 and 1941, federal grants totaling approximately 1.6 million dollars funded the construction of several UNM buildings. In addition to Scholes Hall, the new buildings included a student union in 1938 (now part of the Anthropology building); a men's dormitory (now the Naval Science building); another dormitory, Bandelier Hall-West (now housing the geography department); a state health laboratory (now the Anthropology Annex); a women's dormitory, Marron Hall-East (now the offices for the *Daily Lobo*); a heating plant; and most significantly, the new Zimmerman Library.²⁸

Campus Style

All the New Deal–funded buildings on the UNM campus were designed in the Spanish-Pueblo Revival style, reflecting the region's Native American pueblos and the influence of Spanish colonization. Spanish-Pueblo became the unofficial style of the university during the administration of UNM president George William Tight (1904–1909). In 1904 Tight constructed a new power plant and two dormitories that all displayed varying elements of the regional Spanish-Pueblo style, including asymmetrical massing, flat roofs, buttressing, parapets, portals, vigas, and earthen-colored stucco walls. In 1908 he transformed the university's first and foremost academic building—a large, red brick, Romanesque structure called Hodgin Hall—by applying a Spanish-Pueblo style façade, implying that this building and any new ones would conform to a consistent campus style.²⁹

In order to accommodate a growing student and faculty population, between 1927 and 1931, Pres. James F. Zimmerman promoted the most aggressive building program at UNM to date. He wrote: "We are in the process of filling up the campus with small, ordinary, and unimposing buildings, inadequate for the future, and making exceedingly difficult adequate building plans for the future. If circumstances would permit, I should favor postponement of other buildings until funds for a building program of some proportions could be secured."³⁰

Like former president Tight, Zimmerman admired the regional Spanish and Pueblo architecture. A year prior to taking office as president in 1928, he worked with the UNM board of regents to establish Spanish-Pueblo Revival as the official campus building style.³¹ From 1927 on, all the buildings on UNM's main campus would adhere to this design aesthetic or, in the second half of the century, a broader, modernist interpretation of it. Zimmerman cultivated and maintained a distinct architectural cohesiveness on the main campus. Moreover, his architectural plan was a strategic marketing tool, similar to that of the city of Santa Fe, which had adopted the Spanish-Pueblo Revival style in 1912.³² New Mexico's strict utilization of Spanish-Pueblo design was a charming if romanticized contrivance luring tourists and settlers to the remote area. Likewise, visitors and potential students viewed UNM as exotic.

True to his word, Zimmerman proved to be a campus builder, overseeing the construction of seven new campus buildings in the Spanish-Pueblo Revival style between 1927 and 1931, including the president's home, Bandelier Hall-West, Marron Hall-West Women's Dormitory, Parson's Hall, Yakota Dormitory, Carlisle Gymnasium, and a science lecture hall.³³ These early structures are generally smaller picturesque interpretations of the local style.

Over the next decade this form of construction gave way to a more monumental set of buildings characterized by massive proportions and a refinement of the Spanish-Pueblo Revival style, funded with an influx of federal money.

Another wave in UNM's development arrived in the 1930s. In 1934 President Zimmerman selected Santa Fe architect John Gaw Meem to design buildings on the UNM campus, and the board of regents hired him with initial financing from the New Deal. Until 1959, the year of his formal retirement, Meem's architectural firm was responsible for designing all the buildings constructed on campus after 1934. His earlier and well-known Spanish-Pueblo Revival style designs in Santa Fe made him a logical choice to carry on the job of developing the UNM campus in the regional style. After traveling to New Mexico from New York in 1920 to recover from tuberculosis at Santa Fe's Sunmount Sanatorium, Meem grew enamored with New Mexico's natural landscape and its built environment. During his year and a half of recuperation, he studied the local architecture at the encouragement of Sunmount's director, Dr. Frank Mera. After a period of apprenticeship at the firm of Fisher and Fisher in Denver, Colorado, and a night school course under a program from the New York Beaux-Arts Institute of Design, Meem settled permanently in Santa Fe. He soon became an avid preservationist of the indigenous architecture, helping form a vigorous Santa Fe-based grassroots preservation group in 1923 called the Committee for the Preservation and Restoration of New Mexico Mission Churches.³⁴ Meem served as the group's supervising architect and in this capacity oversaw six restorations, including the epic San Esteban del Rey mission church at Acoma Pueblo. In 1924 Meem also helped establish the Old Santa Fe Association, which still works to preserve and maintain the historic character of the capital city. While restoring and preserving mission churches and local buildings, Meem became a knowledgeable advocate and the main popularizer of the Spanish-Pueblo Revival style. By the time of his first UNM commission in 1934, Meem was the designer of choice for both wealthy eastern transplants and regional municipalities looking to promote a southwestern theme.35

Although Meem's work at UNM built on the Spanish-Pueblo Revival style of previous campus structures, modern materials and a new monumentality of form set his buildings apart. Meem adeptly combined traditional styling and craftsmanship with up-to-date construction techniques and contemporary ideas about how buildings are used. His vision was a logical fit for President Zimmerman's university campus, which would symbolize New Mexico's distinctive heritage and regional style while continuing to address the needs of a fast-growing, modern student body.

BELLMORE ⇒133

Meem designed all his New Deal-financed buildings on the University of New Mexico campus as well as later ones from the 1940s and 1950s in the Spanish-Pueblo Revival style. His first UNM project, Scholes Hall, is a massive three-story solid symmetrical structure with battered walls and terraced wings to the east and west. This structure is a Southwest take on a classical form. Native American and Spanish designs above the broad spandrels of windows on the first and second floors enhance the exterior, which is covered in buff-colored concrete stucco with projecting vigas. Scholes Hall made a bold statement for Meem as an architect.

Zimmerman Library

Meem's second UNM campus commission was the University Library, which was renamed Zimmerman Library in 1961.³⁶ Constructed between 1936 and 1938 with PWA funds and a project cost of \$364,164, the new library replaced a preexisting university library built in 1926, just prior to the major rise in student enrollment during the Zimmerman administration (ill. 1).³⁷ The older structure, the first free-standing university library at UNM, quickly became insufficient in size. As head librarian Wilma Loy Shelton stated in the Biennial Report of 1933–1935, "Our inadequate reading room facilities and our overcrowded stacks are beginning to warn us that before long we must have a new building" (ill. 2). The UNM regents also recognized that the current library was too small to handle the increased demands of the growing student body and that a larger facility was imperative (ill. 3).³⁸

Zimmerman Library, which opened to the public on 1 April 1938, conforms to the same traditional character as the other buildings on the campus. A document entitled "Building Program of the University of New Mexico" states:

It is a style peculiarly appropriate to the University of New Mexico because it reflects the history and traditions of the State it serves. It is based on the forms developed by the Pueblo Indians before the coming of Coronado, and can therefore justly claim to be a truly American Style. These forms were only slightly modified by the Spanish conquest as reflected in the Spanish detail, and were further changed to meet modern plan requirements. The University can take pride in the fact that the architecture of its buildings is unique among American Universities.³⁹

The university's justification of the regional style to the PWA aligned with the New Deal's overall commitment to cultural pluralism and regional



January 4, 1936

THE HONORABLE HAROLD L. ICKES SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR WASHINGTON, D. C.

REGENTS FACULTY AND SIDDENTS MOST HAPPY OVER APPROVAL OF UNIVERSITY BUILDING PROJECT STOP ACCEPT OUR DEEPEST PERSONAL GRATITUDE AND BEST WISHES FOR THE NEW YEAR.

SIGNED:

J. F. ZIMMERMAN, PRESIDENT UNIVERSITY OF NEW MEXICO

MKC

THE QUICKEST, SUREST AND SAFEST WAY TO SEND MONEY IS BY TELEGRAPH OR CABLE





diversity in art and architecture. In Californian PWA projects, for example, "The architectural traditions are confined generally to the Spanish and the American architecture of the first half of the century." Likewise, "traditional architecture of the Colonial period still dominates design" in PWA Region No. 3, comprising Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Tennessee, and Kentucky.⁴⁰

In 1939 head librarian Shelton wrote, "In the land of sunshine and silence, amid limitless deserts and mesas, live the Pueblos whose architecture has been practically and artistically adapted to the needs of the University of New Mexico." Shelton explained that Meem's inspiration for the design was New Mexico's ancient Taos Indian pueblo, which "formed the model for one of the most singular, striking, and beautiful libraries in the country" (ill. 4).⁴¹

The Site

At the time of construction, the library's site measured 487 feet by 760 feet on what was in 1936 the undeveloped northeast side of the main campus. The large plot allowed for future additions to the building. Planners selected the site not only because of the large available area but also because it sat along the main axis of campus. They expected the library to become the center of campus as the university grew. Placed on what was then the north side of campus, Zimmerman Library also offered unobstructed views of the Sandia Mountains to the

Middle: ILL. 2. HEAD LIBRARIAN WILMA LOY SHELTON Shelton breaks ground for the new university library.

Facing page, top: ILL. 1. TELEGRAM FROM UNM PRESIDENT JAMES ZIMMERMAN, 1936

Zimmerman thanks Secretary of the Interior Ickes for the PWA funding of Zimmerman Library.

⁽Photograph courtesy Library-Zimmerman-Correspondence, folder 1 of 2, 1936–1941, box 68, Dept. of Facility Planning Records, UNMA 028, University Archives, Center for Southwest Research, University Libraries, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque)

⁽Photograph courtesy Library-Zimmerman-Photos-Exterior, folder 1 of 3, 1937–, box 69, Dept. of Facility Planning Records, UNMA 028, University Archives, Center for Southwest Research, University Libraries, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque)

Bottom: Ill. 3. ZIMMERMAN LIBRARY UNDER CONSTRUCTION, NORTH FAÇADE, C. 1937–1938

⁽Photograph courtesy Library-Zimmerman-Photos-Exterior, folder 1 of 3, 1937–, box 69, Dept. of Facility Planning Records, UNMA 028, University Archives, Center for Southwest Research, University Libraries, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque)

VOLUME 88, NUMBER 2

east, the five volcanoes to the west, and the Jemez Mountains to the north.⁴² A photograph of the library taken soon after its construction in 1938 shows the vast starkness and dramatic views of the surrounding landscape (ill. 5).



ILL. 4. UNIVERSITY OF NEW MEXICO PRESIDENT JAMES ZIMMERMAN, 18 MARCH 1938 Zimmerman leads a parade of books

from the old university library to the new one. (Photograph courtesy Library-Zimmerman-

Photos-Exterior, folder 1 of 3, 1937–, box 69, Dept. of Facility Planning Records, UNMA 028, University Archives, Center for Southwest Research, University Libraries, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque)



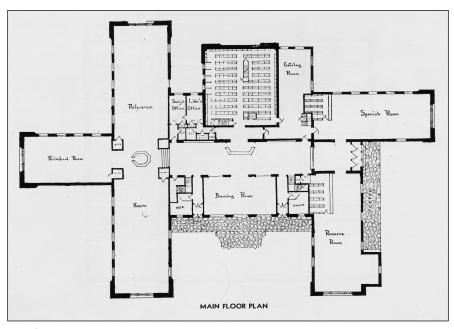
ILL. 5. ZIMMERMAN LIBRARY, C. 1938 A desert landscape sits behind the building soon after construction. (Photograph courtesy Library-Zimmerman-Photos-Exterior, folder 1 of 3, 1937–, box 69, Dept. of Facility Planning Records, UNMA 028, University Archives, Center for Southwest Research, University Libraries, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque)

Building Plan and Exterior

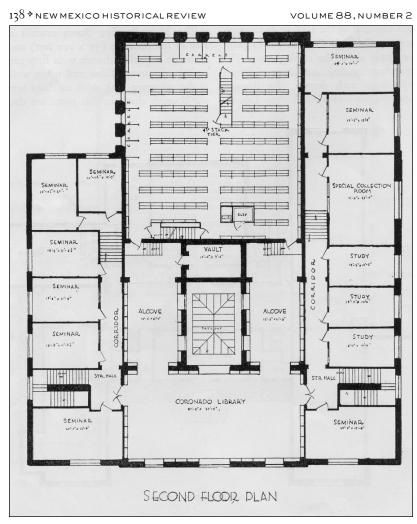
The first floor plan of the original Zimmerman Library structure included clustered reading rooms, reference areas, and service spaces. The second floor housed additional reading rooms, reference areas, and seminar and study rooms (ills. 6 and 7). The basement contained receiving and janitorial services. The building could accommodate 580 students at one time, or 40 percent of the student population on 1 April 1938, the date it opened.⁴³

A central nine-floor tower, which contained book stacks capable of storing 70 percent of the library's collection, was the focal point of the structure.⁴⁴ The reinforced concrete tower was relieved by vertical rows of windows and colorful Native American decorative details. Flanked by two projecting west wings, the flat-roofed, two-story main building contained three main entrances and exits that librarians could monitor from the circulation desk on the first floor. One of the entrances—all large New Mexican portals—was on the south side of the building, and the other two were on the west. Three additional wings projected from the north, south, and east.

Brick, structural clay tile, and reinforced concrete composed the exterior battered walls. Former university architect Van Dorn Hooker writes, "Great



ILL. 6. ZIMMERMAN LIBRARY, MAIN FLOOR PLAN (Photograph courtesy SWA JGM, John Gaw Meem Drawings and Plans Collection, Center for Southwest Research, University Libraries, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque)



ILL. 7. ZIMMERMAN LIBRARY, SECOND FLOOR PLAN (Photograph courtesy SWA JGM, John Gaw Meem Drawings and Plans Collection, Center for Southwest Research, University Libraries, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque)

attention was paid to the batter of the walls, which simulate the effect of erosion on adobe walls."⁴⁵ Earth-colored concrete stucco covered the entire exterior in order for the library to blend with the other Spanish-Pueblo Revival style buildings on campus.

Main Floor

Great Hall. The library's great hall, or main delivery room, as it was called in 1938, stretched 96 feet by 22 feet along the west side of the main floor between

BELLMORE ⇒139

the south entrance and the principal reference area. It supports a beamed and carved wooden ceiling with a centrally located skylight.⁴⁶ Wrought iron and copper gates separated the lobby area from the south corridor. A large oak-and-pine circulation desk sat in the middle of the hall between pine card catalog drawers (ills. 8 and 9). Four inset bays above the card catalogs contained a series of four murals by Taos artist Kenneth Miller Adams.⁴⁷ Field-stone entry areas led to sound-absorbing, black-and-red marbleized linoleum flooring in the main hall.





Top: ILL. 8. ORIGINAL CIRCULATION DESK AND CARD CATALOGS IN MAIN HALL (Photograph by Meleski, courtesy Library-Zimmerman-Photos-Interior, folder 1 of 3, 1937-, box 69, Dept. of Facility Planning Records, UNMA 028, University Archives, Center for Southwest Research, University Libraries, University of New *Mexico*, *Albuquerque*) Bottom: ILL. 9. STUDENT USING CARD CATALOGS IN MAIN HALL, C. 1940S (Photograph by Ike Flores, courtesy Library-Zimmerman-Photos-Interior, folder 1 of 3, 1937-, box 69, Dept. of Facility Planning Records, UNMA 028, University Archives, Center for Southwest Research, University Libraries, University of New *Mexico*, *Albuquerque*)

Browsing Room. The browsing room opened off the main hall, directly opposite the circulation desk. Railings with hand-carved spindles flanked its entrance. This 22-by-48-foot room provided a relaxing space for students outside the quiet study areas of the library. Librarians at the circulation desk in the main hall could also monitor the browsing room.

Reserve Book Room. The reserve book room was located on the west side of the south corridor of the main hall (ill. 10). The room housed 4,536 volumes and could seat ninety-six patrons.

Spanish Room. The other main reference area of the library was the Spanish room, which sat on the east side of the south corridor off the main hall. At night, when wrought iron doors blocked off the rest of the library beyond the reading rooms, patrons accessed the reading rooms through the south entry. *Main Reading Rooms.* Meem placed the main reading rooms north of the principal delivery room. These two imposing rooms, each extending 35 feet by 192 feet, opened from a central crossing where the reference desk was located (ill. 11). He designed them in the Spanish Mission style. Above painted white walls, the wooden ceilings contained carved beams, corbels, and diagonal latillas. The reference desk's design evoked the carving of an old Spanish chest.⁴⁸ The floors of the reading rooms, as in other public parts of the library, were covered with sound-absorbing linoleum. Meem designed the thirty-two pedestaled study tables and 256 chairs in the rooms.

Periodical Room. The periodical room sat directly off the main reading rooms. Sloping wooden magazine racks lined the walls of this 28-by-59-foot room, which contained twelve pedestal tables (identical to the tables of the main reading rooms) and forty-eight chairs (ill. 12).

Bottom: ILL. 12. PERIODICAL ROOM, C. 1939

Facing page, top: ILL. 10. RESERVE BOOK ROOM, C. 1939

⁽Photograph courtesy Library-Zimmerman-Photos-Interior, folder 1 of 3, 1937–, box 69, Dept. of Facility Planning Records, UNMA 028, University Archives, Center for Southwest Research, University Libraries, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque) Middle: ILL. 11. MAIN READING ROOMS, C. 1939

⁽Photograph by Ernest Knee, courtesy Library-Zimmerman-Photos-Interior, folder 1 of 3, 1937–, box 69, Dept. of Facility Planning Records, UNMA 028, University Archives, Center for Southwest Research, University Libraries, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque)

⁽Photograph courtesy Library-Zimmerman-Photos-Interior, folder 1 of 3, 1937–, box 69, Dept. of Facility Planning Records, UNMA 028, University Archives, Center for Southwest Research, University Libraries, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque)



VOLUME 88, NUMBER 2

Book Stacks. The nine levels of the book stacks had a total capacity of 225,000 volumes, plus 4,500 newspaper folios on the basement level. At the library's inauguration, its collection numbered 62,000 volumes, which could be housed on the four floors of available shelving. The staff eventually added five more floors of shelf space to meet the expanded requirements of the library.⁴⁹ Open shelving throughout the various other departments also housed books. The steel bookshelves supported the floor structures and were an integral part of the construction. Elevators and dumbwaiters transported books vertically. The third floor of the stacks was divided into carrels for graduate-student study. The stacks were fireproof with concrete floors and steel windows and doors. The remainder of the building was also fire resistant, constructed with brick bearing walls, tile partitions, concrete foundations and floors, and a concrete roof. A cataloging room lay to the south of the book stacks.

Second Floor

Coronado Library. The Coronado Library, situated to the west of the book tower on the second floor, held the special and archival collections of the university (ill. 13). The collections of the Coronado Library focused primarily



ILL. 13. CORONADO ROOM OF THE CORONADO LIBRARY, C. 1939 (Photograph by Ernest Knee, courtesy PICT 215B-022, Pictorial Collection 000-675, Center for Southwest Research, University Libraries, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque)

BELLMORE →143

on regional and Latin American materials, highlighted by two large acquisitions: the Thomas Benton Catron Library, containing ten thousand volumes; and the Paul Van de Velde Library, holding approximately seven thousand volumes of Mexican books, newspapers, and manuscripts.⁵⁰ Although the Coronado Library served mainly as a repository for rare materials, it also supported other activities, including the translation and transcription of colonial texts in Latin and Spanish. Beyond the Coronado Library, the second floor included twelve seminar rooms and space for rare book storage. Today, the collections of the former Coronado Library are part of UNM's Center for Southwest Research/Special Collections Department.

Woodwork

Builders installed hand-carved and hand-turned woodworks throughout the library. Wood ceilings in the reading and periodical rooms contained tinted carved vigas, corbels, and savions. Carved doors, bookcases, cabinets, dado scrolls, and bancos also filled the library (ill. 14). Carpenters carved the circulation and reference desks in the main hall and reading rooms from California

sugar pine. The pine card catalogs had carved panels. Covers detailed with carved, raised wooden spindles, which were also on the railings into the browsing room, disguised the modern radiators in the main reading rooms.

The detail and authenticity of the decorative woodwork in the library was very important for Meem, who was committed to reviving the regional style and highlighting local craft. Like the Arts and Crafts architects of the previous two decades, Meem believed in making the design of a building's interiors in harmony with the overall structure. As Bunting notes, "Since one purpose of the PWA had been to provide work for craftsmen, there was no need to shortcut a building technique that produced such beautiful results." The elaborate painted carvings resembled Native totem motifs of local



ILL. 14. CABINET FOR LIBRARY, C. 1938 (Photograph courtesy Library-Zimmerman-Photos-Interior, folder 1 of 3, 1937–, box 69, Dept. of Facility Planning Records, UNMA 028, University Archives, Center for Southwest Research, University Libraries, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque)

nature and animals, including bears, birds, deer, and turtles. Three young Native craftsmen—Daniel Murabel of Taos Pueblo, Faustin Talachi of San Juan Pueblo, and Justin Yazzie of Navajo descent—completed the carvings for the building. Following World War II, such extravagances gave way to more economical cast concrete ornamentation in new buildings.⁵¹

Meem also paid detailed attention to the finishes of the interior woodwork. In a letter to the PWA regarding the ceiling's aspen beams, Meem stated: "I came to the conclusion that the most effective treatment of the ceilings would be to have a contrast between the dark antique beams and the unfinished savinas. I therefore instructed the contractor to clean those savinas and bring them back to their original state."⁵²

Tinwork

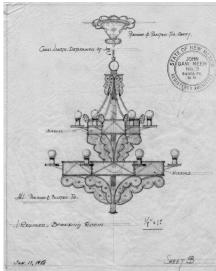
Meem created a cohesive blend of architectural styling and decorative detailing throughout the library. In 1923 he became a founding member of the Santa Fe-based Society for the Revival of Spanish Colonial Arts (currently the Spanish Colonial Arts Society). The society's mission was to encourage, promote, and preserve Spanish colonial art, particularly that of rural Hispanics. The traditional arts promoted by the society included drawing, tinwork, weaving, furniture-making, and carving crucifixes and santos. As a member of the society and a preservationist and admirer of New Mexico's ancient buildings, Meem placed significant value in utilizing local craftsmanship wherever possible in the library building.⁵³ He reported that the "lighting fixtures have been designed in harmony with the various rooms."54 He utilized hand-made Mexican tin lights and decorative tin signage details throughout the library. In a letter to the PWA, Meem revealed his meticulous attention to decorative detail: "Fixtures to be made of 30-pound coating, old style tin, hand punched and decorated. Glass to be single strength, hand painted decorations. Front pane to be hinged and equipped with catch. All punching and decorations to be done by skilled workmen in strict accord with the spirit and intent of the architect's drawings and instructions."55

The Franciscan friars who came to New Mexico with the Spanish conquistadors and created missions in the pueblos taught decorative copper work to the indigenous population. Tinwork took precedence as copper became too expensive and difficult to find.⁵⁶ Cast-off food cans were plentiful after mid-nineteenth-century Anglo settlement in the territory, and locals reworked this metal into both decorative and utilitarian household objects. By 1936, when Zimmerman Library construction began, New Mexicans had been doing decorative tinwork for nearly one hundred years, typically making

BELLMORE →145

frames called *nichos* displaying the religious pictures or figurines frequently seen in Native homes. They also made tin candlesticks, candelabras, and candle-illuminated chandeliers. Meem's electrified tin fixtures in Zimmerman Library were appropriate in both style and usage for the southwestern region.

According to Meem's original drawings, all the light fixtures in the building were to be made of tin (ill. 15). Seven tin chandeliers, nine tin ceiling fixtures, and fourteen tin wall sconces or *pontellas* decorated the halls and reading and reference rooms. The chandelier in the main reading room is an immense construction of tinwork and mirrors that measures five feet in diameter by seven feet tall. It is one of the largest tinwork chandeliers ever made (ill. 16).



ILL. 15. DRAWING LIGHT FIXTURE IN LIBRARY, C. 1939 John Gaw Meem designed the fixture. (Photograph courtesy SWA JGM, John Gaw Meem Drawings and Plans Collection, Center for Southwest Research, University Libraries, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque)

ILL. 16. CHANDELIER, MAIN READING ROOM, 1938 (Photograph by Wyatt Davis, courtesy PICT988-014-0020, Pictorial Collection, Center for Southwest Research, University Libraries, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque)



VOLUME 88, NUMBER 2

The WPA paid Native and Hispanic artisans working in Walter B. Gilbert's shop in Albuquerque to craft Zimmerman's tin fixtures.⁵⁷ These pieces are masterworks of New Deal art. As Tey Marianna Nunn writes, "That the majority of these works were utilitarian and decorative should not keep them from art historical consideration. They are not 'handicrafts,' but rather integral artistic manifestations of cultural identity." The long-standing cultural tradition of tin art in New Mexico continued through vocational training at schools across the state. Many of these programs eventually worked with the WPA and the National Youth Administration to create art in numerous public buildings in New Mexico, including the Museum of New Mexico, the Fine Arts Museum, the Palace of the Governors, and the Laboratory of Anthropology in Santa Fe; the Harwood Foundation in Taos; and the Albuquerque Community Playhouse.⁵⁸

Furnishings

The WPA also financed an impressive set of finely crafted wood furnishings of regional Spanish colonial design for Zimmerman Library: 22 library tables, 2 oversized seminar tables, 227 library chairs, 18 office chairs, 10 armchairs, 7 library carrels, 24 seminar room chairs, and 14 classroom tables.⁵⁹ Like the WPA tinwork, the library's furnishings were primarily constructed in vocational settings by unnamed craftspeople working from Meem's formal drawings. Nunn contends that the "artistic obscurity of the Hispana and Hispano furniture artists is again a result of the conceptualization of what is 'art' and what is 'craft.""60 During the New Deal, the Department of the Interior classified furniture making as a craft, not an art. Through his work with the Spanish Colonial Arts Society promoting traditional furnishings and decorative art, however, Meem wanted to highlight the work of local artisans. Regarding Meem and the other Anglo revivalists, Charles Briggs states, "At a time when overt Anglo-American racism against both Hispanics and Indians was marked, the Anglo-American members of this movement were among the more sensitive and well-intentioned of the newcomers."61

The organizational setup of the WPA, which sponsored workshops and vocational schools that all produced innumerable pieces by various artists working on different parts of a final product, possibly accounts for the unsigned nature of the work. Many of the WPA artisans were youths who received training under the direction of an instructor in a shop setting. One master carver, an instructor in the Taos Vocational School named Abad Eloy Lucera, remembered working on one of the large seminar tables and a set of matching chairs for Zimmerman Library with a number of other artists under the direction of Russell Vernon Hunter, from the New Mexico Federal Art Project.⁶² Today, the utilitarian constructions created by the WPA and used by generations of students and library staff are considered highly prized works of art. Many of the WPA pieces still remain in the library. The furnishings evoke both the New Mexican tradition and the commitment of the New Deal art programs to regionalism.

A Modern Building

As conceived by Meem, Zimmerman Library was aligned with the PWA's overall desire to modernize and improve the safety and quality of public buildings in America. Meem employed the most up-to-date materials and fireproof construction techniques. The exterior framing of the structure is in reinforced concrete. The foundation and footings are also in poured concrete. The nine-story tower consists of 10- to 12-inch steel I-beams encased in concrete slabs. Even decorative elements like the beams of the main reading rooms consist of concrete wrapped in carved planks. A specially designed ventilating system, one ready for conversion to a complete air conditioning system, circulated fresh and "washed" air into all the rooms.

A Growing Building

In 1960, in a report entitled "Program for a Library Building Addition," a special committee of the University Libraries argued for the construction of an enlarged main library: "The present library building, now 22 years old, has been outgrown and is inadequate for present library service needs, not to mention the heavier future demands that will be made upon the library." In 1936 Zimmerman Library had an official capacity of 229,500 volumes. By the time of this report, it had already exceeded this number by 30,789 volumes. Even more significantly, the report calculates that the building was equipped to seat only 9 percent of the student enrollment in 1960-650 students-when it should have seated 25 percent of the student population. The administration had to act soon to accommodate the growing student population by enlarging the library, the heart of the university. The question was whether to add on to the present library or to construct an entirely new building. The report goes on to propose that it "might be possible, and desirable, to use some of the present building for library purposes; e.g. reading rooms might be used as study halls, containing no library books."63

In 1961 the library was officially renamed Zimmerman Library after the late university president. A year later, the board of regents decided to expand the

original structure from the 1930s with a modern addition. Just as traditional Pueblo buildings grew pragmatically and organically according to the needs of their occupants, future additions to the library's east side would be simple and harmonious, according to Meem's geometric and modular design. The site of the present building made additions possible. An entire block had been reserved for expansion of the library. Centrally located between dormitories and classroom buildings, it was 450 feet on the west by 600 feet on the east by 725 feet on the north and south sides.⁶⁴

In 1962, after Meem retired, the firm of Ferguson, Stevens, Mallory, and Pearl in Albuquerque received the commission from the board of regents to complete a set of designs for the newly renamed Zimmerman Library. In a report entitled "Building Needs and Proposals," the architects argue, "The existing library building is considered by many to be the finest building on the campus and one of the most important architectural monuments in the southwest." Meem's original structure would not be abandoned but would remain an integral part of the main campus environment. The firm determined that it could construct an addition (called Zimmerman II) in "harmony and courtesy toward the existing building, creating a single, finished complex."65 Designed by George Pearl, the addition extended from the east side of the structure, as Meem had anticipated. Construction began in August 1965, and the library structure grew to 100,000 square feet, a 40,000-foot increase from the original building. The storage capacity of the library increased from 435,000 to 650,000 book volumes.⁶⁶ In September 1966, Zimmerman Library reopened to the public.

Architecturally, Zimmerman II altered the original structure in a number of significant ways. The new addition nearly eradicated the east façade, which connected the two masses (ill. 17). A new, larger entrance transformed the south façade. The awkward but necessary addition of an elevator block enabling disability access to the book stacks and carrels marred the elegant proportion of the nine-story book tower. On the positive side, the redesign transformed the Spanish Room and original technical service areas into the Clinton P. Anderson Room, with its mezzanine balcony and freestanding fireplace (ill. 18).

Dean, Hunt, and Associates of Albuquerque executed the second major addition to the library (called Zimmerman III) in 1973. This addition extended the library 65,300 square feet to the east. A third major addition to the Zimmerman structure was completed in 1993. Designed by Van H. Gilbert of the Albuquerque firm of Shepley, Bulfinch, and Abbott of Boston, this project extended the structure another 70,000 square feet to the east. It redeveloped the west wing of the original structure to create space for the special collections



ILL. 17. ZIMMERMAN LIBRARY, C. 1969 (Photograph courtesy Library-Zimmerman-Photos-Exterior, folder 2 of 3, 1937–, box 69, Dept. of Facility Planning Records, UNMA 028, University Archives, Center for Southwest Research, University Libraries, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque)

ILL. 18. CLINTON P. ANDERSON ROOM Watercolor by architect George Pearl, c. 1966. (Photograph courtesy SWA Pearl, George Clayton Pearl Drawings and Plans Collection, John Gaw Meem Archives of Southwestern Architecture, Center for Southwest Research, University Libraries, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque)



department, the Center for Southwest Research. The project also added 27,000 square feet of archival storage below ground, a new entry and exhibit space on the ground floor, administrative offices on the second floor, and a mechanical penthouse on the third level.⁶⁷

Kenneth Miller Adams's Murals

From the outset, Meem planned to include a large-scale set of murals in four recessed bays in the library's great hall.⁶⁸ Builders finished construction of the four architectural bays over the course of 1936–1938, but the source of funding for the murals was unclear.

After completion of the library structure in 1938, no PWA money remained to furnish or decorate the building as Meem intended. The local acting director of the PWA, W. Carlos Powell, wrote President Zimmerman, "I am advised by the Central Office that no further amendatory applications, involving additions to the present allotment, may be accepted or given consideration in any manner."⁶⁹ Without any further funding from the PWA, the four great bays loomed empty over the main desk in the great hall of the library for over a year until Zimmerman negotiated grant funding for the murals through the Carnegie Foundation's new artist-in-residence program. The Carnegie funding enabled Zimmerman to finally hire Kenneth Miller Adams to work on the murals and also to teach part-time in the UNM Department of Fine Arts. Adams continued to teach and serve as an artist in residence at UNM until 1963, eventually reaching professor emeritus status in the fine arts department.⁷⁰

The overall subject matter of Adams's four murals mirrors the theme and style of the building itself by representing each of the three prominent New Mexican peoples—Native Americans, Hispanics, and Anglo Americans—and how their contributions to the local culture blended together, with a sense of the past and a view toward the future. In the words of UNM architectural historian Chris Wilson, his murals "constitute the foremost distillation of the visual iconography of triculturalism."⁷¹ The first panel depicts traditional Native American arts and crafts (ill. 19). A Navajo woman wears silversmith jewelry as she sits in front of a loom. A Taos man symbolizes Pueblo pottery making. An Apache woman sitting in front of a colorfully decorated teepee represents the dislocation of the Apache people.

The second panel highlights Hispanic contributions to the evolution of New Mexico's landscape, distinctive architecture, and religion (ill. 20). A Hispanic woman plasters over an adobe home. The small window of the house frames a Catholic church in the colonial style introduced by Spanish

settlers. A farmer uses a plow to cultivate a field, representing Spanish influences in agricultural techniques.

The third panel represents Anglo American contributions to the region in the field of science and technology (ill. 21). A doctor holds up a newborn baby, symbolizing the future. Two green-coated scientists conduct research in the background, representing innovation. Through a window, images of the sun, moon, and stars shine through.

ILL. 19. KENNETH MILLER ADAMS, MURAL PANEL 1, 1938 Oil on canvas, 89 x 127 in. (Photograph courtesy New Mexico Digital Collections, Zimmerman Library, University Libraries, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque)

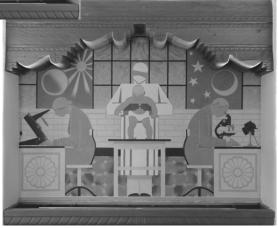


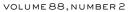


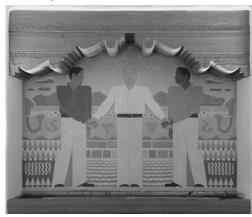
ILL. 20. KENNETH MILLER ADAMS, MURAL PANEL 2, 1938 Oil on canvas, 89 x 127 in. (Photograph courtesy New Mexico Digital Collections, Zimmerman Library, University Libraries, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque)

ILL. 21. KENNETH MILLER ADAMS, MURAL PANEL 3, 1938

Oil on canvas, 89 x 127 in. (Photograph courtesy New Mexico Digital Collections, Zimmerman Library, University Libraries, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque)







ILL. 22. KENNETH MILLER ADAMS, MURAL PANEL 4, 1938 Oil on canvas, 89 x 127 in. (Photograph courtesy New Mexico Digital Collections, Zimmerman Library, University Libraries, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque)

The fourth panel portrays three youthful figures: one Native and one Spanish student flanking a central Anglo student (ill. 22). The images represent the three primary New Mexican cultural groups helping one another form a better life in the region. Adams placed images of the natural beauty and resources of New Mexico, including mountains, mesa, desert, sage, yucca, and cactus, behind a flowing river and a plowed field. To the right and left, lakes and forests frame the three figures. Overall, the mural represents an appreciation of the natural and cultural landscapes of New Mexico and optimism for the possibilities of the future gained by working together.

In the 1970s, the four Adams panels became the subject of intense controversy. In the context of the civil rights movements for African Americans, Chicanos, Native Americans, students, and women, Adams's murals appeared dated. Protestors twice splashed paint on panel four, requiring extensive and expensive restoration. In the 1990s, during a rally on the UNM campus, speakers debated the artistic, symbolic, and historic value of the murals. The university has fortunately preserved the murals, which today serve as a teaching device to demonstrate how to read artwork in historical context and how meanings, informed by cultural and societal transformations, change over time.⁷²

Adams's portrayal of Native life in New Mexico, as illustrated in the first panel, is stereotypical by today's standards and represents an early twentiethcentury racial hierarchy. He depicts the primary Native groups of the region— Pueblo, Navajo, and Apache—alongside colorful examples of their art. The land is often a source of ordeal to Hispanic farmers in Adams's other works from the period, but here he bonds the Native inhabitant to the earth in an organic manner. He presents Natives as primitive peoples engaging in preindustrial forms of work and art. Most of the figures in the panel are women in passive postures: leaning, kneeling, and sitting.

BELLMORE ⇒153

Similarly, the Hispanic figures in the second panel engage in rudimentary activities: plastering and plowing. In the 1920s and 1930s, Adams was well known for his documentation of and compassionate regard for the region's Hispanic communities and their history, culture, and labor. New Mexican writer Erna Fergussen concludes, "Kenneth Adams lovingly depicted the wisdom of wrinkled old women in both paintings and lithographs, and found truth in the Indian's frank approach to our angular landscape."73 His interests determined the subject matter of his early work in New Mexico. In Evening, Adams depicts the resolve of the elderly Hispanic subsistence farmer. In The Dry Ditch, he portrays a Hispanic farm family struggling to survive against the background of a dry acequia, depleted crops, and a lifeless tree. In The Adobe Maker, a worker shovels mud into brick forms. Although Anglo incomers and infertile land dominate Adams's Hispanics, they appear as determined descendants of the conquistadors and are anything but docile and downtrodden. He illustrates the highly skilled architectural, material, and technical refinements that Hispanic culture brought to New Mexico. By placing his Native and Hispanic subjects in acquiescent and laboring positions, however, Adams displays ethnic, class, and gender biases, advancing "the subconscious prejudices that can be embedded even in a populist program."74

Adams's Anglo doctor and scientist figures in the third panel are also products of the time. In the early twentieth century, medical services and scientific endeavors moved to New Mexico in significant numbers. After the introduction of the railroad in the 1880s, tuberculosis clinics proliferated throughout the state, attracting multitudes of health workers and health seekers, primarily from the East Coast and the Midwest.75 Historian Jake Spidle asserts that tuberculosis was "one of the central factors in the foundation and development of hospitals across the state; it was the main reason for the migration of hundreds of physicians to the state; and it heavily influenced the basic structure and differentiation of the state's medical profession. Simply put, it was one of the basic factors in the peopling and development of the state, in general, in the critical decades just before and after statehood." By the 1940s, federal laboratories and research facilities sprang up in Albuquerque, Los Alamos, Roswell, and White Sands. These sites transported a new academic population from the East into New Mexico.⁷⁶ Although Adams's historical interpretation is generally correct, his presentation is imperceptive. The simplistic depiction of blond-haired, blueeyed Aryan figures perpetuates the nineteenth-century belief in the manifest destiny of Anglos to expand across the continent and lead other races to American democracy and a more "advanced" future.⁷⁷

By flanking the Anglo man, who looks ahead with open eyes, the shut-eyed Spanish and Native figures in the fourth panel assume a somewhat deferential

position. The forward-looking Anglo seemingly leads the Native and Hispanic races out of the dark. Yet all three figures stand on an equal plane, hold hands, and wear the same style of shirts and trousers, symbolizing equality between the races. Moreover, all the figures positioned in silhouette in the four panels have closed eyes, which was apparently a technical preference for Adams.

Although ultimately funded by the Carnegie Corporation, the Zimmerman murals are also related to WPA-funded murals in the state and across the country. With their portrayal of people connecting through work and coming together for the advancement of the social good, they echo the democratic sentiment of the Depression era. By portraying the three prominent New Mexican cultures and their unique contributions to the state's social, economic, and built environment, the murals are clearly part of the New Deal's larger project of highlighting social and regional diversity and American labor.

Adams is a transitional figure in early twentieth-century modern art in New Mexico. His style is at once conservative and modernist, incorporating simple, uncomplicated, two-dimensional human shapes. Art historians Mary Carroll Nelson, Ted Egri, and Kit Egri conclude, "Adams was a successful muralist. His bulky, plastic figures have carrying power. That is appropriate to the mural form and fits smoothly into his simplified schematic approach."⁷⁸ Adams was a contemporary realist who broke down natural shapes into more geometric patterns of line and rich color, developing a plastic and monumental quality of form by exaggerating their contours.

Similar to other New Deal–era murals, Adams's style and subject matter connect to the work of the Mexican Muralist Movement and specifically the murals of Diego Rivera. Beginning in 1921, the new government of Mexico initiated a national program of public education that brought mural art to public schools and education buildings in Mexico. The murals highlighted the culture, history, and politics of the various Mexican regions.⁷⁹ Spanning an approximately fifty-year period, the Mexico education department financially supported almost every painter in Mexico at one time or another. Adams shared the Mexican muralists' compassion for the common man's condition. He portrayed his subjects, mostly Hispanic and Native Taos friends and neighbors, as busy in the activities of their everyday lives.⁸⁰

Unlike Rivera, who rejected Europeanism and made the Mexican elements central to his images, Adams painted the Native and Spanish elements through Anglo eyes.⁸¹ The dominant Anglo culture of the time probably considered these images to be liberal and progressive. They helped bring about a change in thinking and attitudes that eventually led to much broader views on race, ethnicity, and diversity. Ultimately, Adams's murals convey the

BELLMORE ⇒155

conceptions of his time. They represent an important step in the development of the cultural identity of the country and the beginnings of the effort to accept ethnic identity, tolerance, and diversity.

Landscape

After obtaining additional New Deal funding through the WPA to plan and develop the landscape immediately surrounding the university library, UNM created the so-called WPA Grove in 1938. The WPA Grove primarily consists of trees that are native to New Mexico—ponderosa pine, blue spruce, and Rocky Mountain juniper—with a broad carpet of green grass underneath. Originally planted around the entire library, today the remaining grove is concentrated on the north and west corners of the building. Planted as small saplings, the trees have grown to complement the library's nine-story tower in size, providing a distinctive, shady spot on the main campus.⁸²

Although it does not match the surrounding desert landscape, the WPA Grove fits with other WPA landscaping projects in the United States and New Mexico. On a national level, typical WPA landscape projects represented a rustic, bucolic America. Regionally, the WPA Grove presented a version of the "frontier pastoral" style seen in a number of other WPA landscapes in New Mexico. Landscape historian Baker Morrow defines the "frontier pastoral" as "the Southwest equivalent of the designs of the English Landscape Gardening School of the 18th and early 19th centuries." These classic pastoral gardens, which included configurations of trees, grass, flora, and sometimes a water feature, stand out in the typical arid desert landscape. Though unnatural to the area, they provided cool and inviting gathering places. Some other examples of WPA-funded frontier pastoral sites around New Mexico include the grounds of the Carry Tingley Hospital in Truth or Consequences and Roosevelt Park in Albuquerque.⁸³

Reflecting the building's Southwest style, Zimmerman Library's surrounding landscape also highlights native desert plants, specifically in the Castetter Succulent Garden, designed and planted by UNM biology professor Edward F. Castetter and a group of his students in 1941. At the time, Professor Castetter was at the forefront of the emerging field of ethnobiology, which focused on the interrelationships of animals, plants, and the human environment. Castetter's influential paper from 1944, "The Domain of Ethnobiology," laid out a system for the study of such environments. Located on the west side of the library, the garden's plants sit around a center flagstone path and inside a low, stacked stone retaining wall. He used succulents of varying heights and colors in the design of the garden, including prickly pear, ocotillo, Parry agave, cholla, Indian fig cactus, lechuguilla, wahoo, stool spoon flower, claret cup cactus, Mormon Tea, California poppy, spirea, Datil yucca, and soaptree yucca.⁸⁴

The Castetter Succulent Garden was an early and prominent example of a cacti garden in New Mexico and became a focal point for the campus. The garden was a location for UNM publicity photographs in the 1940s, featuring students posed in Santa Fe–style clothing (ill. 23). It was also an attraction of national significance, promoting tourism along Route 66.⁸⁵ UNM's Castetter Hall of Biology was named after the garden's designer, who also served as dean of graduate studies for the university.



ILL. 23. CASTETTER SUCCULENT GARDEN, ZIMMERMAN LIBRARY, C. 1940S (Photograph by Harvey Caplan, courtesy Library-Zimmerman-Photos-Exterior, folder 1 of 3, 1937–, box 69, Dept. of Facility Planning Records, UNMA 028, University Archives, Center for Southwest Research, University Libraries, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque)

Significance

The design of Zimmerman Library responded socially, aesthetically, and technologically to national trends, methods, and materials as well as the requirements of the PWA. The library's building, artwork, and surrounding landscape represent a significant and unique time in the history of the United States and the Southwest. New Deal construction and arts programming provided jobs for the unemployed and filled the need for new public buildings while indicating the diversity of the "American scene." Because the

BELLMORE ≯157

Roosevelt administration promoted local traditions and the appreciation of regional natural environments across the United States, there was no single New Deal style. Instead, New Deal art, architecture, and landscape designs typically reflected the surrounding community, and building construction incorporated local natural resources. The style of much of the New Deal work in New Mexico was a convergence of the region's three primary cultures: Native American, Hispanic, and Anglo.

Zimmerman's influential architect, John Gaw Meem, honored the traditional styles and craftsmanship of the region's ancient buildings while adapting them to modern needs and materials. Meem declared, "We New Mexicans can take pride in having our own regional style of architecture, unique to the world, yet functional, modern, and still evolving."⁸⁶ He was responsible for the preservation and conservation of historic Spanish-Pueblo buildings and their stylistic revival in the first half of the twentieth century. Unlike the early Spanish-Pueblo Revival style buildings, with their quality of archaeological reproduction, Meem's designs blended the forms of the traditional Spanish-Pueblo buildings with the requirements for modern use. He came from an engineering background and was interested in applying the latest technologies and modern building methods while remaining sympathetic to the look, feel, and craftsmanship of the indigenous architecture.

The early twentieth century was a period of architectural eclecticism. Influenced by the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893, which exhibited interpretations of primarily European styles, American architects created historical reproductions of Tudor, French, Dutch Colonial, and Mediterranean styles for their clients, even if they lived in Buffalo, New York, or Des Moines, Iowa. Led by Meem, however, a number of New Mexican architects expressed what they believed to be the "spirit of the region" in New Mexico by utilizing the traditional forms, materials, colors, and styles of the Southwest. When legendary architect Frank Lloyd Wright visited UNM in the 1960s, he proclaimed that the campus design was imitation. Meem firmly responded, "By this dubious and incorrect statement, he classified the Zimmerman Library building with its ten-storied vertical stack as imitation. An imitation of what? If by imitation is meant the recalling or reflection of the past, he would condemn the whole of the Renaissance."87 Wright and Meem actually drew from the same Romantic tradition in building design, emphasizing asymmetry, a connection to the land, and the use of local materials.88 Clearly, Meem was not trying to "imitate" adobe architecture. Instead, he said that he was trying "to recall by means of a conventionalized symbolic form the heritage of ancient buildings, or the characteristic shapes of the landscape."89 Although Meem's Spanish-Pueblo constructions, like

the popular period revivals of the era, romantically evoked another time, they also reflected the region, communicating a clear sense of place rooted in historical tradition.

Locally, Zimmerman Library and other Spanish-Pueblo Revival style campus buildings from the 1920s and 1930s served as models for further residential and commercial development off campus. Modest, vernacular buildings and neighborhoods sprang up in all directions. Meem's much-admired Spanish-Pueblo residences and public buildings influenced mass development of similar, more modest homes. Using the grander residences designed for an elite clientele as models for middle- and working-class home owners, from the 1920s onward local speculative developers built small-scale pueblos that proliferated in neighborhoods across Santa Fe and Albuquerque, two places where Meem worked extensively.

Today, Zimmerman Library remains at the heart of the University of New Mexico as both a symbolic and geographical center of its campus. Through the practical foresight of Meem, who envisioned additions to the original structure following new demands and increased enrollment, Zimmerman Library still serves its original purpose as the main library of the UNM campus. New Deal buildings such as Zimmerman Library offer an example of how economic problems may be solved in a practical way. New Deal construction programs provided a measure of financial relief for thousands of unemployed workers, including the many Native American and Hispanic craftspeople from impoverished villages who worked on Meem's UNM buildings.⁹⁰

In 1999 Zimmerman Library received the Centennial Award from the New Mexico chapter of the American Institute of Architects, in honor of significant buildings contributing to the architectural heritage of the state. Van Dorn Hooker, UNM's university architect from 1963 to 1987 and a former member of the firm of Meem, Holien, and Buckley (1951–1956), writes: "A few years before Meem died, I asked him and his wife Faith to visit the campus . . . and then took them into the original part of the library. As we stood in front of the old circulation desk, John said he thought it was the finest building he ever designed in the Pueblo Style."⁹¹ The strength of the library's thoughtful design has made it an icon of the University of New Mexico and a symbol of the New Deal's commitment to improve the economy, modernize the public infrastructure, and highlight the nation's diverse cultural landscape.

Notes

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BELLMORE ≯161

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