

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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SR 1190

Historic Resources of Downtown Gallup
McKinley County, New Mexico

1. Name: The El Rancho Hotel
2. Location: 1000 East 66th Avenue
Gallup, New Mexico
3. Classification:
Category building
Ownership private
Status unoccupied
Accessible yes: unrestricted
Present use vacant
4. Owner of Property:
Armand Ortega
1000 East 66th avenue
Gallup, New Mexico 87301
5. Location of Legal Description:
McKinley County courthouse
205-209 West Hill Street
Gallup, New Mexico
6. Representation in Existing Surveys:
New Mexico Historic Building Inventory
August 1885
New Mexico Historic Preservation Division
228 E. Palace Avenue, Rm 101
Santa Fe New Mexico 87503
7. Description:
Condition good
altered
original site
Builder/Architect Joe Massaglia

The El Rancho Hotel is a large, rambling, Rustic style building built in 1936 by Joe Massaglia for "Griff" Griffith. It is built of brick, random ashlar stone, and roughhewn wood. Some portions of the brick areas consist of an unusual and intentionally laid "wavy" brickwork, giving the hotel a

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rusticated fantasy appearance. The structure is located approximately one mile east of downtown in an area developed in association with the tourist boom of the thirties.

This rambling hotel revolves around a central three-story building containing the main lobby and early rooms. It has a pitched wood shake roof, with several brick and stone chimneys. The main entry has a large portico and second floor balcony supported by six square wood posts with lathed and rounded tops. This section reflects a grandeur reminiscent of the southern Plantation Style. Below this is a smaller balcony on the flat-roofed entry vestibule portion. The three main doors are of roughewn wood, with porthole lites, surrounded by wide brick segmental arches and surrounds. The entry vestibule and lobby area are constructed of random ashlar stone. The entry has a one-story flat roof, the lobby area has a two-story flat roof. Windows in this central section are of varying types and sizes of wood casements and double-hung wood sash, with soldier course brick surrounds and/or wood framing.

Another balcony exists at the third-floor level on the east end of the facade, and is constructed of dark wood with criss-cross balustrade decoration. A restaurant on the west side of the entry built of random ashlar stonework appears to be original to the building with a small shed-roofed addition at the north (front). The walls of the first floor of the central portion consist of random ashlar stonework, while the walls of the upper two stories are brick. The building is painted on the exterior in white and dark brown. It is in good condition even though portions of the building have been unsued for some time.

The main entry into the building leads into the one-story entry vestibule and then into the two-story main lobby. The lobby is large and square in plan, with a criss-cross balustrade balcony running around the perimeter at the second-story level. The ambiance of this room is that of rusticated western grandeur mixed with the feel of a hunting lodge. Check-in takes place along the west wall of the room, in a wooden cage-like office. At the rear of the lobby is a spectacular walk-in fireplace cove made of brick and random ashlar stonework. This appears to be original with some recent repair and renovation. On each side of this massive fireplace, wooden stairways wind their way up to the balcony which encircles the first floor. The stairs are made of split logs, the flat side forms the treads. The railings are made of naturally bent, stripped and polished tree limbs. The two sides of the staircase curve away from each other and then back toward each other at the second floor landing. The

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second-floor balcony is detailed with dark wood wainscoting and has windows in the east and west, French doors on the north, and chairs that invite leisurely waits. These doors access several rooftop patios. The balcony is lined with photographs of scenes and moviestars from western movies filmed in Gallup from 1929-1965. The south wall of the second floor has two centrally located, arched, roughhewn wood, double doors leading to the guestrooms.

The main floor of the lobby is basketweave brick, and although the exterior walls in this portion are stonework, the interior walls are brick. The lobby is furnished with heavy, carved, dark wood furniture, with Navajo rugs hanging from the balcony, deer head trophies hanging from the columns, and stamped tin lights. The ceiling is defined by squared and chamfered beams with plaster in between. The beams in the balcony area have been "distressed".

To the west of the main lobby a hallway leads to various dining rooms and bars. One dining room close to the lobby remains in use and appears to be recently modernized. On one wall of this room is a unique, stonework fountain built floor to ceiling. At the far end of the modernized dining hall is a stage and barroom area. On the southside of the stage is a short staircase which leads down to another barroom lined with booths and a vaudeville type stage. Across from this room is an older dining hall, smaller, with no exterior windows, and decorated with hand-painted floral designs.

The guestrooms of the hotel have been remodeled at various times; they do not retain their original character, furnishings or finishes, and are small and out-of-date.

Additions to this central portion have been constructed on the east and west end, giving the hotel a rambling, linear shape running east to west. There appear to have been two periods of addition and renovation work, the earlier ones having pitched roofs, the later one having a flat roof. Window placement in the additions remains consistent with the original, and are generally of four-over-four or six-over-six double hung wood sash. A few windows have diamond lites. All windows on the early additions are wood framed, the later additions have heavy wood lintels and stucco over frames. Early additions are "wavy" brick and regular brick, the later addition is random ashlar stone on the first floor, heavily textured stucco with vigas on the second floor.

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The building is painted on the exterior in white and dark brown. It is in good condition even though the building is unused.

8. Significance:

Area of significance architecture
commerce

Period of significance 1936

Criterion A associations with tourist and movie industries in Gallup

Criterion C use of rustic styling

The 1936 El Rancho Hotel is architecturally significant for its use of rustic styling and historically significant for its associations with both the tourist and movie industries in Gallup.

Historically the El Rancho is closely associated with two important aspects of Gallup; the tourist trade and the motion picture trade. The early tourist trade in the area was concentrated closer to downtown, but the tourists of the 1930s and 1940s often stayed at the El Rancho in particular because the Inter-Tribal Ceremonial took place across the street.

In the early 1900s the motion picture industry arrived in Gallup. "Griff" Griffith came to Gallup in the early 1930s to direct a movie, fell in love with the area, and returned in the mid-1930s to build the El Rancho. His association with the hotel from the very start meant that this hotel became the "center" of the movie industry in Gallup. The current manifestation of this phenomenon can be seen in the photo "museum" on the balcony of the lobby.

Architecturally the El Rancho is an excellent example of the Rustic Style, a style rarely used in Gallup. Typified by a "picturesque western" look, this style is often found in tourist accommodations in the West. The building has various additions, all of which retain the original look, if not the original style, of the hotel.

9. Major Bibliographical References: See continuation sheets

10. Geographical data: The nominated property consists of Block 14 of the I.H. Ford Highway 66 Addition.

Quadrangle Name: Gallup East

Quadrangle Scale: 7.5 minute

Acreage: approximately one acre

Zone 12 Easting 706580 Northing 3933960