National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

1. Name of Property

   Historic name: O’Keeffe, Georgia, Ghost Ranch House

   Other names/site number: Rancho de Los Burros

   Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

   (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

2. Location

   Street & number: US-84, 280 Private Drive 1708, House 115 northwest of the Ghost Ranch Education & Retreat Center

   City or town: Abiquiu           State: NM          County: Rio Arriba           Zip Code: 87510

   Not For Publication:   Vicinity:

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

   As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this X nomination ___ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

   In my opinion, the property X meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

   X_national         X_statewide         ___local

   Applicable National Register Criteria:

   ___A         X_B         X_C         ___D

   Signature of certifying official/Title:                     Date

   State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

   In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.

   Signature of commenting official:                     Date

   Title:                     State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government
4. National Park Service Certification
I hereby certify that this property is:

__ entered in the National Register
__ determined eligible for the National Register
__ determined not eligible for the National Register
__ removed from the National Register
__ other (explain:) _____________________

Signature of the Keeper __________________ Date of Action ____________

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply.)
Private: X
Public – Local
Public – State
Public – Federal

Category of Property
(Check only one box.)
Building(s)
District X
Site
Structure
Object
O’Keeffe, Georgia, Ghost Ranch House
Name of Property

Rio Arriba, New Mexico
County and State

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

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Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register ____N/A____

6. Function or Use
   Historic Functions
   (Enter categories from instructions.)
   Domestic: single dwelling
   Commercial/Trade: professional

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)
Recreation and Culture: museum
7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions.)
Late 19th and 20th Century Revivals: Pueblo

___________________
___________________
___________________
___________________
___________________

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)
Principal exterior materials of the property: Adobe; Stucco; Wood

Narrative Description
(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a summary paragraph that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph
The Georgia O’Keeffe Ghost Ranch House was the home and studio of the artist Georgia O’Keeffe, who summered on the property between roughly 1936 and 1948 and continued to use the house seasonally into the 1980s. Here, O’Keeffe painted some of her most important and most recognizable paintings, including landscapes of northwest New Mexico, skulls, and clouds. The house is located in an unincorporated area of Rio Arriba County, on an unmarked road northwest of the Ghost Ranch Education & Retreat Center. The roughly U-shaped, Pueblo Revival-style dwelling is organized around a patio, which opens to the south with views of Cerro Pedernal—a geologic landmark and subject of many of O’Keeffe’s paintings. The house is framed to the north by colorful banded cliffs, which O’Keeffe painted and referred to as her backyard. The three-sided adobe house is composed of a mostly single-file of small rooms covered with a flat roof supported by vigas. The artist spent most of her time in the east side, which included the kitchen, pantry, dining room, and breakfast nook, and the north side, which included her studio, the largest room in the house, and, in the northwest corner, her bedroom. The house maintains a high level of historic integrity, and most rooms include period furnishings and some of the artist’s personal items. The eight-acre property includes the house and studio, tack room/shed, drive, parking ramada, and a variety objects associated with artist’s life and work.
Narrative Description

Ghost Ranch House—Setting

Ghost Ranch is located within the Chama Basin, a geological zone following the Chama River, where the Rio Grande Rift meets the Colorado Plateau. The soil from the Chama River floor to the cliffs framing Ghost Ranch represents a rich geological timespan covering 130 million years. The colorful rock formations that create the backdrop of Ghost Ranch were formed by the uppermost part of the Chinle Group, created during the Triassic era. These brick shales, ranging in color from orange to red, contain rich deposits of fossils. Above the Chinle are bands of dusty yellow and orange sandstone formed during the early Jurassic period (photo 1, figure 4). O’Keeffe called these stratified, multihued cliffs, her “backyard.”

Northeast of Ghost Ranch House stands Chimney Rock, a geologic landmark made of Entrada sandstone capped with a gray layer of Jurassic-period Todilto limestone. This landmark was the subject of several O’Keeffe’s paintings. To the northwest, marking the end of the sandstone cliffs stands Puerto del Cielo, another Entrada-sandstone “chimney.” Nearer to the house are lobes of maroon-to-light-gray soft mudstone, which O’Keeffe called her badlands. She would frequently ascend these during her daily walks, and used a few as subjects of her paintings.

To the south, the land descends gently toward Abiquiu Lake, a section of the Chama River dammed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in 1963. The view south is uninterrupted for nearly fifteen miles. Looming in the distance is Cerro Pedernal, a narrow, flat-topped mesa formed of Late Triassic to Early Cretaceous sedimentary rocks. The soft-shouldered mesa was an important source of flint to Native Americans, who considered it a sacred site.

The house is approached by a rough, winding unpaved road, created in the early 1960s when the highway to the south was realigned during the construction of Abiquiu Lake. Historically, the property was approached from the west, following a circuitous route that passed over a wood-truss bridge that spanned Arroyo Seco.

The “New Road,” as O’Keeffe called it, is accessed from the main drive to the Ghost Ranch Education and Retreat Center. After passing through a locked cattle gate, the dirt road meanders northwest passed multihued cliffs and purplish-gray badland formations. The first view of the house is its east elevation. After crossing an unnamed arroyo, a small, paved drive, recently covered with crushed granite, enters the O’Keeffe property to the south, where it loops past the

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1 The description of Ghost Ranch’s geology is based on a discussion of the same in L. Greer Price, The Geology of Northern New Mexico’s Parks, Monuments, and Public Lands, (Socorro, N. Mex.: New Mexico Bureau of Geology and Mineral Resources, 2010), 213-222.
2 Here, Ghost Ranch refers the to the 21,000-acre educational and spiritual retreat. Georgia O’Keeffe’s property is identified as Ghost Ranch House.
3 Agapita Judy Lopez, conversation with John W. Murphey, Ghost Ranch, July 8, 2019. Lopez was one of O’Keeffe’s companions in the late 1970s and is now the Project Director for the Abiquiu Historic Properties. Lopez’s knowledge of the property is extensive.
tack room/shed and corral. It passes a parking area before turning north and passing under a juniper-pole ramada (shade structure). After skirting the east side of the house, it turns into a two-track path terminating at the pumphouse/casita (photo 19).

The north side of the property is guarded by a six-foot-high “coyote” fence, a structure made of stripped juniper poles joined together with cattle wire. Juan Hamilton erected the fence in the 1990s to provide privacy.4 Immediately after entering the property, to the west, is the small, square-adobe tack room, which is now used for storage (photo 20. The nearby horse corral dates form the Pack family’s ownership of the property (photo 21). To the southeast is a low masonry wall believed to surround a now-lost tennis court built during the Pack era.

**Ghost Ranch House—Exterior**

Ghost Ranch House is sited on level land and because of its color and low profile appears natural in its setting (photo1). In plan it is a U-shaped building with its base slightly wider than its walls (photo 2). The form references early Spanish and Mexican-era colonial houses in which a series rooms opened onto a placita (courtyard). In these Spanish houses the U-was formed by a single-file of independent block-like rooms, mostly accessible by exterior doors. Each room at Ghost Ranch has both a door onto the courtyard and interior passages through a shallow corridor.

The house, built in 1933, is constructed of double-wythe adobe walls. Except for sections that have been rebuilt or needed to accommodate a change in grade, the walls lie directly on the earth. They are finished with several layers of cementitious stucco. Soon after purchasing the property, O’Keeffe used stucco to plaster the exterior as a way to simplify maintenance. The house is an excellent example of the Pueblo Revival style, with its patio-oriented plan, porches (or portals), and rounded parapets pierced by vigas, and canales (rain spouts).

**North Elevation**

The north side, facing the cliffs, best reveals the changes that were made after the Pack family’s brief use of the house (photos 4-5). These changes, mostly made during the period of significance, reveal O’Keeffe’s thoughtful alteration of the façade to create a light-filled painting studio, and a bedroom and breakfast room that emphasized views of the outdoors.

The low-to-the-ground façade reveals a symmetrical design with a central raised section flanked by lower walls. This symmetry is interrupted by the array of windows, which range from small single-hung units to wide expanses of plate glass. O’Keeffe had the openings and mechanisms changed on four windows. The original openings on this and other elevations have bull-nosed reveals, with windows and doors set approximately four inches behind the wall.

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4 Ibid.
In 1964 Maria Chabot, one of O’Keeffe’s assistants, installed a square-glass panel in the east end to create the breakfast nook. The plate-glass windows enclosed what is thought to have been a small porch. By inserting the windows, O’Keeffe created an intimate space adjoining the kitchen, where she could gaze north toward the colorful cliffs as she had breakfast or read her mail.

West of the breakfast nook window is an original wood-and-glass door leading to a bathroom. The next opening, holding a large six-light fixed window, represents O’Keeffe’s first modification to the house. Even before purchasing the house in 1940, the artist enlarged the opening to bring more light into her seasonal studio. As built in 1933, the opening originally held a pair of four-over-four, single-hung wood windows. O’Keeffe realized this space had the best light and expanded the opening in 1937, increasing both its height and width to accommodate a large, six-light wood window.

O’Keeffe made a more dramatic alteration to the companion windows in the next opening. Originally, during the brief Pack ownership, it contained four-over-four, single-hung sash windows. To bring additional light into the studio, O’Keeffe expanded the opening in the 1950s, to hold a nearly seven-foot-long sheet of plate glass. This picture window is flanked by four-over-four sashes. To the west is an unaltered opening holding an original six-over-six, single-hung wood window.

Nearing the northwest corner is an original door matching the entry found at the east end of the house. The northwest is marked by a large expanse of glazing illuminating O’Keeffe’s bedroom (photo 5, far right). Similar to the breakfast nook, O’Keeffe enclosed this space to create her bedroom. Like the breakfast nook on the opposite end, the bedroom is defined by two sheets of seven-foot-long plate glass. The wide expanse of glazing that rested on low bulkheads provides views of the cliffs from the bed.

**East Elevation**

The east façade facing the driveway presents an uncomplicated elevation penetrated with mostly original openings (photo 6). Starting at the north end is the east-facing breakfast nook picture window. A narrow wood-panel door is adjacent to the glass. The kitchen is illuminated by a non-historic window is composed of fixed and casement components.

The next opening contains an original wood-panel door to the pantry. A rectangular, fixed window flanked by single-light casements provides light to the dining room. The combination window is likely not original, but the casement hardware suggests older construction. South of the dining room is an original four-over-four bathroom window. The last opening, giving light to the south bedroom, is another original, multi-light single-hung wood window. The last two windows provide views of Chimney Rock to the east.

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5 The pantry door previously served as the main entrance to the house.
West Elevation

The west elevation works as the functional side of the house (photo 7). It contains the large garage door, but no other entrances. The façade is mostly obscured by piñon and junipers. It is fenestrated conventionally with original and restored multi-light wood sash windows. The west façade terminates at the southwest corner with a garage enclosure. The volume bumps out approximately 6' from the wall.

The two-car garage is original to the house. Historic photographs show the garage with approximately the same opening, but with a sliding wood door. The south façade of each wing is penetrated by a single window opening. The west wing has a set of two, four-over-four sash windows on south wall of the garage. The south window on the east wing has been replaced with a single sheet of glass.

South (Patio) Elevation

The south elevation is represented by the three sides that enclose the patio.⁶ The portal (porch) provides a six-foot-wide covered passage along the three sides of the courtyard (photos 2-3). The portal is supported with round posts that are peeled and spaced at seven-foot intervals. The posts carry vigas and remaining portal roof. Spanning the posts are squared 6 ½” × 7 ½-inch wood beams, rusticated with adz marks. The beams are different lengths and joined with 8-inch-long lap joints. The vigas rest on the beams and support latillas, or roof boards, which are laid in an opposing direction. The portal roof slopes slightly toward the courtyard and is capped with a rounded parapet. The patio walkways are finished with random-laid flagstone, which was reconstructed during the 1999-2000 restoration.⁷

The windows facing onto the courtyard are mostly original or restored units.⁸ They are primarily four-over-four sash, except at the south elevation, where a pair of six-light wood casements brings light into the studio (photo 2). This opening originally held a large, fixed picture window.⁹ Most of the entries are fitted with standard five-panel wood exterior doors. The exception is the wider entry to the studio, which holds an assembled door, which gives the appearance of plank construction.

Low earthen bancos, or benches, frame the south sides of the portal. These historic features date to the original construction. The banco at the southeast corner was once covered with bleached bones that O’Keeffe had collected during walks. The south edge of the bancos are terminated by short, wrought-iron fencing dating to the original construction. These panels, which O’Keeffe salvaged from a fence framing the south end of the patio, consist of alternating twisted-and-

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⁶ In Hispanic New Mexico houses the courtyard is traditionally called a placita. O’Keeffe described this space at Ghost Ranch House as a patio, as indicated by the paintings The Patio—No. I, 1940 and Patio No. II, 1940.
⁷ Joel Muller, conversation with John W. Murphey, August 2, 2019, Santa Fe, New Mexico. Muller is the owner of Tent Rock, Inc., which oversaw the 1999-2000 restoration project.
⁸ Ibid., telephone conversation with John W. Murphey, July 12, 2019.
⁹ This is based on a c.1933 Pack family photograph, held at the Tent Rock, Inc., office.
square pickets topped with spikes. O’Keeffe removed the overly ornate structure and replaced it with a more functional snake fence, which edges the south side of the courtyard.10

Features of the portal fashioned by O’Keeffe include long cedar slabs that she mounted along the south wall in c.1960s (figures 9 and 14). Situated 13 inches above ground, these slabs were used for shelving. Arranged across them were an assortment of skulls, bones, and antlers. Hanging between the window to the pantry and the door to the dining room is a rusty spherical saw blade that O’Keeffe hung on a telephone climbing spike. Placed along the portal are low-wood benches and seats made of timber rounds, which date to O’Keeffe’s ownership (figures 6, 9, and 14).

A leader, which is a recreation of a ladder that O’Keeffe used to access the roof, leans across the east side of the portal. There, she and guests would observe the stars, sometimes spending the night. These elements are important features of the portal and reveal O’Keeffe’s curiosity and her awareness of nature.

**Ghost Ranch House—Interior**

**East Side**

**South Bedroom**

The south bedroom in the east wing is a square room that O’Keeffe kept for her guests (photo 8). Similar to other spaces, the room has a plank floor and a viga-and-board ceiling. The ceiling in this room is painted white, the same wall finish as the dining room. The room includes a fogon (corner fireplace). The fogon is elevated twelve inches above the floor and has a tall, parabolic-arched opening. O’Keeffe reconstructed the fireplace in 1941, finding the opening too large.11

Another feature of the room is a built-in bookcase on the east wall. Like the dining room, the bedroom has a walk-in closet.

**Dining Room**

The south bedroom and dining are joined by a small bathroom. O’Keeffe used the dining room for formal occasions, such as hosting guests. Based on its dimensions, the dining room likely began as a bedroom for one of the Pack children. The walls are finished with a dark buckskin-sand plaster. This finish, found in several rooms, probably dates to Juan Hamilton’s ownership. The ceiling height of 8’-1” was used throughout the living areas of the house.

The room is illuminated by the combination picture window (photo 9). This window occupies most of the east wall, offering views of Chimney Rock. Like many of the windows O’Keeffe installed, the dining room window has a deep interior sill with ample room for displaying

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10 Lopez, conversation with John W. Murphey
11 Ibid.
objects. The dining room ledge is lined with smooth stones collected by the artist. Built into the south wall is a shallow bookcase, holding items important to O’Keeffe. The shelves made of red sandstone, display stones, sheets of mica, a pine cone, and pottery shards. A closet in the southwest corner indicates the room’s original function as a bedroom. The closet features strips of wood with hooks. The small fireplace located in the west wall was fashioned in 1941 by a local craftswoman.12 To the south is a low adobe banco built by Maria Chabot.

**Bathroom**

The bathroom is located between the dining room and the south bedroom. It features a concrete floor, and likely used by the Pack children. The 46-square-foot space is painted white and has an open shower stall, tank toilet, and an enamel wall-hung sink.

**Pantry**

The Pantry is a narrow, rectangular room, historically used to store food and cooking equipment (photo 10). The white walls reveal what appears to be an original hand-plastered finish. Large vigas span the ceiling; the floor has the same type of planking as the kitchen. The south wall is covered by storage shelves. These household items, such as containers of spices, food preparation equipment, and storage canisters were used by O’Keeffe, who enjoyed cooking. The room includes original equipment, such as a Frigidaire refrigerator and a Maytag deep freezer. The space is lit by a single hanging lightbulb.

**Kitchen**

The kitchen is a large rectangular room measuring approximately 172 square feet. Like many rooms in the house, the walls are painted white and the flooring is seven-inch-wide plank boards. This type of rustic flooring was popular during the 1930s for Spanish Revival-style houses. The kitchen floor was originally finished with sheet linoleum, which was removed during the 1999-2000 renovation.13

Wood cabinetry spans the north wall. The cabinets are original, but the hardware was replaced during the renovation. O’Keeffe used the white porcelain double-sink along the west wall. During the restoration, its basins were carefully re-enameled.14 The chamber stove replicates the one O’Keeffe used before she purchased an electric stove in c.1960s.15 The ceiling is supported by vigas with round roof boards.

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13 Muller, telephone conversation with John W. Murphey.
14 Ibid, conversation with John W. Murphey.
15 Lopez, conversation with John W. Murphey.
Breakfast Nook

O’Keeffe created the breakfast nook in 1964 when she enclosed a small porch used for firewood storage and created an entrance from the kitchen. The pantry was the principal entrance to the house, but later the breakfast nook became the preferred entrance. The roughly 612-square-foot room is dominated by its wide corner windows (photo 12). A banco that is roughly fourteen inches tall lines the west wall. Here, O’Keeffe enjoyed her breakfast and other meals of the day. In front of the banco is an original table missing its top. The room viga-and-latilla ceiling features small-diameter aspen poles, peeled and shaped with a knife. Ceilings in the house vary between aspen latillas and narrow, roughly 3 ¾”-wide-milled boards. The floor is finished with original maple boards.

North Side

Studio

Georgia O’Keeffe’s studio is a long, light-filled room where the artist worked on some of her most important paintings (photos 13-15). The studio is divided into two spaces across the north side of the house. It began as the Pack family’s living room and library. Starting in 1936, O’Keeffe took over the space, turning it into her seasonal studio (figure 12). The larger room is a 364-square-foot space dedicated to O’Keeffe’s art production. Aside from the large windows, the most notable feature is a large fireplace centered on the north wall (photo 13). Dating to the Pack period, it has a wide firebox framed by earth-tone stucco. Its mantel is formed by a long, flat piece of sandstone. The hearth is created by two blocks of dark-red sandstone. O’Keeffe installed two windows on each side of the fireplace. The first is a large six-light east window with nearly unobstructed views of the multihued cliffs behind the house. This window is seen in early photographs and appears several times in the 1948 short film, “Land of Enchantment.” The west window, a long picture window, has a 14¾”-deep sill that O’Keeffe used to hold books and painting supplies. The east wall originally had a door opening to the kitchen, which O’Keeffe enclosed to afford her more privacy for painting. The artist also removed a Pack-era built-in bookshelf along the same wall (figures 10-11). Stills from the 1948 film show the ceiling and fireplace were painted white.

Furniture and fixtures from the O’Keeffe period include the cow skull above the fireplace, the easel in the northeast corner, two Eames chairs in front of the fireplace, a Barwa lounge chair, and other small pieces of furniture. Low cedar-slab shelving runs along the west and south walls of the studio. O’Keeffe installed custom stereo-speaker cabinets to bring music into the studio. She worked with a Santa Fe sound engineer to come up with the design. The speakers, placed in a long 6 ½” x 14” box, are positioned along the ceiling of the east wall and painted white to blend with the room. O’Keeffe incorporated a small study into her studio, where she kept the a McIntosh receiver, tube amplifier, and turntable on a cedar-slab shelf.

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16 Ibid.
17 Ibid.
18 Lopez, conversation with John W. Murphey.
This smaller studio room contains a daybed and O’Keeffe’s writing desk. Soon after purchasing the house O’Keeffe removed a door to the study and created a much wider passageway to allow a continuous flow of movement between the two areas. O’Keeffe’s simple daybed, built by local craftsman Joe Ferran, dominates the room. The artist would often take naps between painting sessions. An original steam radiator on the north wall was converted to radiant heat during the 1999-2000 project.

**West Side**

**O’Keeffe Bedroom**

Through another narrow doorway fitted with a five-panel door is a small space that Georgia O’Keeffe used as her bedroom. The smallest bedroom of the house, at 120 square feet, attracted O’Keeffe because of the expanses of glass across the northwest corner (photo 16). These plate-glass windows open the small room to the vast desert landscape. The seven-foot-long glass panels rest on low bulkheads, increasing the sense of an indoor-outdoor connection. The flagstone floor supports the assertion that this bedroom was originally a porch. The walls are finished with a nonhistoric “diamond” veneer plaster, added during Juan Hamilton’s period of ownership. A cedar-slab shelf spans a portion of the south wall. In the center of the room is a small bed with a white cotton cover.

**Bathroom**

A small, rectangular bathroom and closet are located south of O’Keeffe’s bedroom. The bathroom is minimally furnished with a tank toilet, wall-hung sink, and a porcelain tub. The tub, original to the house, is small with a length of only 46½ inches. The west and south walls covered with nonhistoric tile, which replicates the original surface. O’Keeffe stored her clothes in a closet on the west wall. The wardrobe is fitted with plain-wood shelves and boards with wire coat hooks.

**Library/Guest bedroom**

O’Keeffe turned what was probably the Pack family’s master bedroom into a library/guest bedroom (photo 17). The room has windows on its east and west walls. Similar to most of the rooms in the house, its ceiling is made of vigas and latillas. A fogon stands near the southeast corner. The fireplace is angled with a triangular-shaped hearth with its back against the door. A custom desk, built by O’Keeffe, is located in the southeast corner. A small bed built by Joe Ferran occupies the south wall. On the north the artist built a bookcase shelf fashioned from fruit packing crates she acquired from a store in Abiquiu. Some of the boxes have original labels, including one advertising Mother Colony valencia oranges packed in Anaheim, California.

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19 Ibid.
20 Muller, telephone conversation with John W. Murphey.
21 Lopez, conversation with John W. Murphey.
Blue Room

The Blue Room, named for the color of its floor, is the only space, apart from the garage, with access solely from the exterior. The room has a concrete floor painted blue, approximating a color commonly used by O’Keeffe in her paintings. The rectangular room has two windows and a corner fireplace. An original floor-to-ceiling cabinet stands in southeast corner. The ceiling is made of naturally finished vigas topped with narrow boards. The room historically served as Arthur Pack’s office. O’Keeffe converted it to a bedroom, which was initially used by Gerri Newsom, the artist’s original cook and helper.22 It was heavily reworked during the 1999-2000 restoration, which included repairs to sections of wall and rebuilding the fogon.23 The room, which is currently used as storage, includes shelves holding O’Keeffe’s camping equipment.

Garage

The two-car garage, which is located in the southwest corner of the house, is approached from the drive to the west, and is entered from the plaza to the east (photo 18). The garage is the largest rooms in the house. Its floor is made of poured-concrete panels, which were installed during the 1999-2000 rehabilitation project.24 The ceiling is spanned by large vigas topped with wide rough-sawn boards and supports a nonhistoric sectional overhead door. Historic photographs indicate it originally had sliding wood doors. O’Keeffe replaced the doors in c.1965 while painting Sky Above Clouds IV (1965). Inexpensive storage shelves cover the north wall. A wood-frame storage structure finished with vertical boards takes up the southwest corner. O’Keeffe used this closet to store her art supplies; it currently holds the building’s radiant heat furnace. In the 1970s, O’Keeffe used the garage to park her white Mercedes sedan.

Household Objects, Studio Objects, and Objet d’Art

The furnishings that belonged to Georgia O’Keeffe and remain in the house are important in conveying the significance of the Ghost Ranch House. Throughout the house, in nearly every room, are objects associated with the artist’s life at Ghost Ranch. These objects, selected by O’Keeffe, include tables, chairs, beds, desks, bookcases, and in the pantry and kitchen, a sink, stove, freezer and refrigerator. The garage, piled high with recent items, includes objects connected to O’Keeffe.

O’Keeffe’s studio includes a Barwa lounge chair, two Eames chairs, a cabinet, day bed, writing desk, stereo system and overhead speakers. Her studio also includes objects she collected from the surrounding landscape, including large and small mounted deer skulls, and a cattle skull above the mantel. The house includes O’Keeffe’s collections of bones, horns, skulls, and rocks, which she arranged and rearranged. These objet d’art can be found in almost every room, on

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22 Ibid.
23 Ibid.
24 Muller, conversation with John W. Murphey.
shelves, book cases, tables, benches, window sills and displayed on the patio. These objects in the household, studio, and her collections are counted as one contributing object.

**Secondary Buildings, Structures, and Sites**

The O'Keeffe property includes more resources than just her house and studio. Some were built by the Pack family and others were constructed by the artist. Resources are determined contributing or noncontributing based on the level of historic integrity they maintain. Contributing status is also based on their association with O'Keeffe. She bought the property in 1940 after the Pack family had built the house and outbuildings. During her years as a permanent resident and then a seasonal resident of the Ghost Ranch House, the outbuildings achieved significance because of their association with O'Keeffe, because, whether she used the resources or not, they formed her creative environment. The artist was captivated by the ranch and the outbuildings and structures that define the ranch. O'Keeffe, it must be understood, maintained a broad sense of ownership that extended to beyond her property to include the cliffs to the north and most of what she could see from her house. Her connection to the landscape extended to her frequent subject, Pedernal, ten miles to the south. “It's my private mountain,” O'Keeffe wrote, “It belongs to me. God told me if I painted it enough, I could have it.”

**Pumphouse/Casita**

Built as part of the Pack property, the original pumphouse has been modified over the years, losing much of its historic integrity (photo 19). Photographs from the Pack era show it to be a small mud-clad shed with limited fenestration. Long viga ends pierced the east and west elevations. A metal windmill with a fan-wheel assembly stood to the south. The windmill was removed in c.1964 and replaced with an electric generator and pump in an addition on the south façade. In the next decade, a rectangular concrete-block room was also added to the south façade to serve as a pottery kiln for both her and Juan Hamilton. The 1999-2000 rehabilitation project further increased its size by adding a kitchen and bathroom at the northeast corner and a portal to the north elevation, nearly doubling the size of the original pumphouse. The pumhouse/casita no longer appears as it did during the period of O'Keeffe’s residency.

**Tack Room/Shed**

The tack room/shed, located near the entrance to the property, is a small, adobe building constructed and operated as a tack room by the Pack family (photo 20). The roughly 224-square-foot building is oriented southeast, with only plank door. The flat roof sheds water over the north elevation through a single canale. The building is clad with cementitious stucco. An early, undated photograph from the Pack era shows a mud-plastered exterior. A pair of antlers are embedded in the adobe above the doorway. In her 1991 oral history, Maria Chabot recalls living in the shed for a short period in the 1940s.
Tennis Courts

The Pack family constructed tennis courts on the east side of the drive at the north end of the property. The courts measure roughly 130 feet long by sixty feet wide and are surround by a low stone wall. Abiquiu area historian Lesley Poling-Kempes refers to a clay tennis court used by the Pack family. The dimensions of the present structure are roughly twice the size of a standard court. The rectangle is visible on a 1935 photograph and appears to be a level surface cleared of vegetation. The aerial image from 1963 indicates vegetation inside the walls. The walls are also visible in Google Maps. Nothing remains of the courts, except the stone wall.

Corral

The corral, located southwest of the tack room, is formed by horizontal juniper rails strung between double posts and fastened with wire (photo 21). The enclosure makes a small arc before disappearing because the northern half of the corral has collapsed. This type of fence is ubiquitous in rural New Mexico and is often used as a substitute for more expensive milled post-and-rail fencing. Early references to the corral indicate it was used by the Pack family for horses and antelopes.

Drive

The two-track unpaved drive joins resources in the northeast quadrant of the property. The curvilinear drive forks onto O’Keeffe’s property from an unnamed and unpaved road to the north. The drive, heading south, skirts the tack room/shed and corral to the west and the tennis courts to the east. It approaches the west side of the house and the garage. The drive then loops south of the house and turns north, under the parking ramada, to the pumphouse/casita, where it terminates. The drive has a clear association with O’Keeffe and her use of the property.

Parking Ramada

The parking ramada, built across the drive southeast of the house, is a shade structure for O’Keeffe’s vehicles. The roughly open-walled structure is made of four round Juniper poles that support a roof also constructed Juniper. Its design is based on a traditional brush arbor used by Native Americans, particularly on the Navajo Reservation. O’Keeffe used the traditional form to shelter her automobile. It was built before 1974, and given its impermanent material, probably received in-kind replacement over the years. Although its date of construction is unclear, the parking ramada has a direct connection with O’Keeffe and her use of the property.

Fence

A fence constructed of Juniper poles joined by wire is located on the north side of the property between O’Keeffe’s property and the unnamed road. The fence, almost a thousand feet long,

26 Lopez, email to John W. Murphey, July 26, 2019.
provides privacy from passing cars and horseback riders. The palisaded fence, also called a coyote fence, was built between 1964 and 1997.

**Historic Integrity**

In 1986, following O’Keeffe’s death, Juan Hamilton, a sculptor and O’Keeffe’s companion, received the property. Hamilton made small changes to the interior by updating walls, ceilings, and floors with popular finishes of the period. In 1999 the Burnett Foundation of Fort Worth, Texas, purchased the property and initiated a rehabilitation that spanned 1999 to 2000. The project reconstructed sections of the north elevation, rebuilt or replaced windows, and installed a radiant-heat system. The rehabilitation also enlarged the pumphouse/casita. In 2005, the Burnett Foundation donated the property to the Georgia O’Keeffe Museum in Santa Fe.

The Ghost Ranch House maintains a high level of historic integrity during the Georgia O’Keeffe period of ownership from 1940 until her death in 1986. The house was built by Arthur Pack in 1933. By 1936 O’Keeffe was a regular visitor, and even making improvements to the house facilitate her painting. The artist purchased the house in 1940 and, until 1965 the artist continued to make large-and-small-scale changes to the house for ease of living and to improve her production of art. O’Keeffe’s changes, which included removing walls, adding windows, and reassigning room functions, have personalized the house so that its clearly conveys the significance of Georgia O’Keeffe and her art in its location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

**Table of Contributing and Noncontributing Resources**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resource</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Date of Construction</th>
<th>Contributing Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>Building</td>
<td>1933; 1940-1964</td>
<td>Contributing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Building</td>
<td>c.1933</td>
<td>Contributing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drive</td>
<td>Structure</td>
<td>c.1933</td>
<td>Contributing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parking Ramada</td>
<td>Structure</td>
<td>Before 1974</td>
<td>Contributing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household and Studio Objects</td>
<td>Object (1)</td>
<td>1940-early 1980s</td>
<td>Contributing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Corral</td>
<td>Site</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Contributing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tennis Courts</td>
<td>Site</td>
<td>c.1933</td>
<td>Contributing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pumphouse/Casita</td>
<td>Building</td>
<td>1933; 1970s; 1999-2000</td>
<td>Contributing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fence</td>
<td>Structure</td>
<td>1964-1997</td>
<td>Contributing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria
(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

☐ A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.

☒ B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.

☒ C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.

☐ D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations
(Mark “x” in all the boxes that apply.)

☐ A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes

☐ B. Removed from its original location

☐ C. A birthplace or grave

☐ D. A cemetery

☐ E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure

☐ F. A commemorative property

☒ G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years
O'Keeffe, Georgia, Ghost Ranch House
Name of Property

Rio Arriba, New Mexico
County and State

Areas of Significance
(Enter categories from instructions.)
Art
Architecture

Period of Significance
1933-1982

Significant Dates
1933: Arthur Pack completes the house, later known as Ghost Ranch House
1936: O'Keeffe’s first use of house as a studio
1937: O'Keeffe makes alteration to the house by installing a large studio window
1940: O'Keeffe purchases the house and property from Arthur Pack
1948: O'Keeffe’s last use of the house as primary New Mexico residence
1965: O'Keeffe paints *Sky Above Clouds IV* (1965), her last major work at Ghost Ranch
1982: O'Keeffe makes last regular visits to Ghost Ranch House

Significant Person
(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)
O'Keeffe, Georgia Totto

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder
Peabody, Elbert E. “Ted” (builder)
O'Keeffe, Georgia, Ghost Ranch House                Rio Arriba, New Mexico
Name of Property                                       County and State

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The Georgia O'Keeffe Ghost Ranch House is eligible at the national level under National Register Criterion C in the area art because O'Keeffe produced her earliest works and some of her most important work at Ghost Ranch, including her landscapes of the cliffs near her house, Red Place at Ghost Ranch, Black Place near Aztec, New Mexico, and series devoted to bleached cattle bones she found in the area, especially skulls and pelvic bones. After exhibitions in husband Alfred Stieglitz’s prestigious New York gallery, O'Keeffe was firmly established as an independent and successful modern painter. The artist first visited New Mexico in 1929 and by 1934, she was firmly ensconced in the Arthur Pack House at Ghost Ranch, near Abiquiu. In 1940 she purchased the house and made significant alterations to accommodate her painting. The Georgia O'Keeffe Ghost Ranch House is eligible at the national level under National Register Criterion B in the area art because of its association with Georgia O'Keeffe, who, since 1916, was a leader in a crucial phase of the development and dissemination of modern art. For five decades, the artist continued to find inspiration in found objects and in the landscapes of the Chama valley in New Mexico. The Georgia O'Keeffe Ghost Ranch House is eligible at the state level under National Register Criterion C in the area architecture because the house includes an excellent example of an artist studio in which O'Keeffe made significant modifications to accommodate her painting.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least one paragraph for each area of significance.)

The Georgia O'Keeffe Ghost Ranch House is the house at Ghost Ranch in the Chama River valley in rural northwest New Mexico, where she found inspiration in the landscape and produced some of her most important paintings. After exhibitions in husband Alfred Stieglitz’s prestigious New York gallery in the 1910s and 1920s, O'Keeffe was firmly established as an independent and successful modern painter. The artist first visited New Mexico in 1929 and by 1934, she was firmly ensconced in the Arthur Pack House at Ghost Ranch, near Abiquiu. In 1940 she purchased the house and made significant alterations to accommodate her painting. O'Keeffe used the house as her full-time residence until she moved into her Abiquiu house in 1948. The Ghost Ranch House served as a seasonal retreat where the artist painted and worked with ceramics until she moved to Santa Fe in 1982.

O'Keeffe first discovered Ghost Ranch, a dude resort, in 1934, and made a habit of returning to the area almost every summer to paint. The house, an adobe, U-shaped, Pueblo Revival-style dwelling with central patio, had been constructed the year before for Arthur Pack, a wealthy writer and naturalist who later managed the dude ranch. O'Keeffe began making changes to the dwelling, including enlarging one of the windows to provide more light to her temporary studio in 1937, before she purchased the home in 1940.
By the mid-1940s, it became clear that the Ghost Ranch House had limitations, particularly its lack of potable water and suitable soil to raise food. Working with Maria Chabot (1913-2001), a friend and assistant, O’Keeffe acquired an old adobe hacienda in Abiquiu to serve as an alternative to Ghost Ranch. Restored and renovated between 1946 and 1949, the Abiquiu House, with its larger size, customized floor plan, electrical service, dependable water, garden, and orchard, became the artist's primary home after O’Keeffe moved to New Mexico permanently in 1949. O’Keeffe used the more isolated Ghost Ranch House during the summer season to paint and relax and escape from both Abiquiu village life and admirers who sought her out for visits.

O’Keeffe explored new artistic territory at Ghost Ranch, including several phases using bones as both subject and framing devices. These paintings include Ram’s Head, White Hollyhock – Hills (1935), and the Pelvis Series, with Pelvis Series – Red with Yellow (1945). Paintings made at Ghost Ranch, both in approach and subject, are distinguished from art O’Keeffe created earlier in New York at the Abiquiu House. She was perceived by critics “as an interpreter and manipulator of natural forms, as a strong and individual colorist and as the lyric poet of her beloved New Mexico landscape, she left her mark on the history of American art and made it possible for other women to explore a new gamut of symbolic and ambiguous imagery.”

Edith Asbury described the artist and her work:

O'Keeffe had never stopped painting, never stopped winning critical acclaim, never stopped being written about as an interesting "character." But her paintings were so diverse, so uniquely her own and so unrelated to trends or schools that they had not attracted much close attention from New York critics. Then, in 1970, when she was 83 years old, a retrospective exhibition of her work was held at the Whitney Museum of American Art. The New York critics and collectors and a new generation of students, artists and aficionados made an astonishing discovery. The artist who had been joyously painting as she pleased had been a step ahead of everyone, all the time.28

Georgia O’Keeffe, who worked in rural New Mexico far from the cultural centers of modernism, and she produced modern paintings apart from modern schools or circles of modern artists. She painted abstract imagery when it suited the subject. Lewis Mumford wrote, “Georgia O’Keeffe has carried the symbol both close to actuality and close to pure abstraction.” Alfred Barr, Jr., director of collections of the Museum of Modern Art from 1943 to 1968, wrote:

Georgia O’Keeffe has produced a few abstract paintings, but they are among the most memorable in American Art. Even in her paintings of objects—barns, mountains, trees, lakes, enormous flowers, clam shells, or white desert bones that fill the whole sky—she has the gift of isolating and intensifying the things seen,

28 Ibid.
Georgia O'Keeffe has become, according to critic Mark Stevens, “an iconic figure, a woman who represents an essential version of the American dream.” The Ghost Ranch House is one of the most important artistic sites in the Southwestern United States. The house, surroundings, and views of the New Mexico landscape inspired many of the artist’s best-known paintings. By the time her retrospective exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in New York in 1970, O'Keeffe was recognized as a major figure in American art in the 20th-century.

The Georgia O'Keeffe Ghost Ranch House is eligible at the national level under National Register Criterion B in the area of art because of its association with Georgia O'Keeffe, who, since 1916, was a leader in a crucial phase of the development and dissemination of modern art. For five decades, the artist continued to find inspiration in found objects and in the landscapes of the Chama River valley in New Mexico. Art critic Hilton Kramer wrote that O'Keeffe "is unlike almost any other in the history of modern art in America. It [O'Keeffe’s career] embraced virtually the whole history of modern art, from the early years of the century when Stieglitz exhibited the new art to a shocked New York, to its eventual acceptance as a part of our culture. Kramer continued, O'Keeffe remained "a vital figure first of all as a painter of remarkable originality and power but also as a precious link with the first generation of American modernists."  

Georgia O'Keeffe was perceived by the public and the modern art establishment as a feminist. She succeeded in the predominantly male circle of Alfred Stieglitz in New York before moving to New Mexico and establishing a studio nearly alone in the wilderness of the Chama valley in the 1930s and 1940s. She renovated one house and later rebuilt a second. Photographs of her in New Mexico painting alone in the desert, holding cattle bones, and riding on the back of a motorcycle fueled her reputation as an independent artist who could work without the support of a school or circle of artists. Asbury described her:

... as an artist, as a reclusive but overwhelming personality and as a woman in what was for a long time a man's world, Georgia O'Keeffe was a key figure in the American 20th century. As much as anyone since Mary Cassatt, she raised the awareness of the American public to the fact that a woman could be the equal of any man in her chosen field. As an interpreter and manipulator of natural forms, as a strong and individual colorist and as the lyric poet of her beloved New

31 Quoted in Asbury.
32 Ibid.
Mexico landscape, she left her mark on the history of American art and made it possible for other women to explore a new gamut of symbolic and ambiguous imagery.33

O’Keeffe also had the benefit of certitude throughout her life. She seldom exhibited self-doubt and almost never changed her mind one she had made a decision. This decisiveness is evident in the precision in which she stacked bones or collections of rocks on patio and in her alterations to her houses. In her painting, her friend and biographer, Anita Pollitzer, explained “the image is clear in her mind before she begins to paint.”34 The underpaintings of her work indicate that her finished paintings closely match her first pencil sketches on the canvas with little or no changes through the process of completing the work.35

The Georgia O’Keeffe Ghost Ranch House is eligible at the state level under National Register Criterion C in the area of architecture because the house is an excellent example of an artist studio, a property type established in New Mexico with the studios of the Couse Sharp House in Taos; Gustave Baumann in Santa Fe; and Peter Hurd and Luis Jimenez, both in the Hondo Valley in Lincoln County. O’Keeffe, like many artists, modified an existing space to serve as a studio. O’Keeffe, with Chabot's assistance, altered the house with a picture window to increase northern light and expand views from her studio. O’Keeffe redesigned the north wing to incorporate a small former study into her studio. She installed a modern stereo system and surrounded herself with modern furniture and the animal skulls and rocks, which she had collected on her property. O’Keeffe worked on large canvases and the studio is among the largest rooms in the house. Her largest canvas, Sky Above Clouds IV (1965) was painted in the garage. Where others artists used their studios as a place to convert sketches and plein-air works into finished paintings, O’Keeffe used the house and studio, with its expansive windows, to find inspiration from her immediate surroundings. “The artist transformed the house into a building that focuses on landscape, “a house to look from.”36

Criteria Consideration G: Properties that have achieved significance within the last fifty years. The O’Keeffe Ghost Ranch House meets Criterion Consideration G because the property continues to achieve significance in a period less than fifty years before the nomination. The painting Sky Above Clouds IV (1965) may be considered her last major work at the Ghost Ranch House. However, the property continues to achieve significance because the artist, who was by then 78 years of age and hindered by failing eyesight, continued to produce artworks at the property. After she moved to her house in Abiquiu in 1948, the artist returned seasonally to Ghost Ranch to paint and produce ceramics. From 1965 through the 1970s O’Keeffe produced seven oil paintings at Ghost Ranch. Her friend and photographer Todd Webb helped her acquire a 1950s Leica and later a 1960s Polaroid. O’Keeffe used her “snaps” as a form of sketching.

33 Ibid.
34 Pollitzer, A Woman on Paper, 265.
35 Plotek.
36 Ariel Plotek, interview with Steven Moffson, Santa Fe, New Mexico, March 10, 2020.
She also painted landscapes in watercolor, which are little-known because of their fragility. The artist then turned to ceramics beginning in 1974. She produced sixteen glazed-and-unglazed stoneware pots through the remainder of her residency at the Ghost Ranch House. These were fired in the kiln she built in the pumphouse/casita. “O’Keeffe’s urge to create remained undiminished until the end.” Agapita Judy Lopez, who started working for O’Keeffe in 1974, recalls that the artist resided at Ghost Ranch during the summers until 1982. This is an important period for scholars studying the last decade of O’Keeffe’s art and her career generally. By 1984, her failing health required her to move to Santa Fe.

Developmental history/additional historic context information

Introduction

Georgia O’Keeffe, one of the most important modern painters of the 20th century, was born on November 15, 1887, near Sun Prairie, Wisconsin, a small farming village on a slope facing the open prairie. Her father, Francis O’Keeffe, operated a 600-acre dairy farm and owned a feed store in town. Her mother, Ida Totto O’Keeffe, managed the family of seven children, of which Georgia was the second oldest.

O’Keeffe attended the local high school and showed artistic talent, painting scenes she saw of the natural world. Her schooling was interrupted when her father, hoping to avoid tuberculosis, uprooted the family and moved them to a white clapboard house in Williamsburg, Virginia. After some readjustment, O’Keeffe finished high school at the Chatham Episcopal Institute in Williamsburg.

At the urging of one of her teachers, the young artist enrolled in the Art Institute of Chicago, the famous incubator of American talent. There, starting in 1905, O’Keeffe studied with John Vanderpoel, the Dutch-American artist who systematized figure drawing. But O’Keeffe’s time at the institute was short, as she was struck with typhoid. She returned to Williamsburg in 1906 to convalesce.

She started again on her formal education in 1907, moving to New York City to attend the Art Students League of New York, where she studied under William Merritt Chase, Frank Vincent Dumond, and Francis Luis Mora. Chase, an early proponent of Impressionism, had an effect on O’Keeffe, instilling in her an ethic that life and art were vitally intertwined. At the League, she painted the still life, Dead Rabbit and Copper Pot (1907), which won a competition, leading to a scholarship to attend the school’s summer camp at Lake George, New York. During her time in New York, O’Keeffe visited a Henri Matisse exhibit at Alfred Stieglitz’s Little Galleries of the Photo-Secession (commonly called “291” for its address on Fifth Avenue). Stieglitz, a

37 Ibid.
38 Lopez, “Artwork from Ghost Ranch” Excel Spreadsheet. On file at Georgia O’Keeffe House and Studio, Abiquiu, New Mexico.
39 Plotek.
pioneering photographer and prominent arts promoter, would have an enormous influence on O’Keeffe’s early career.

After working a few years as a commercial artist in Chicago, O’Keeffe returned to Virginia, where she enrolled in an advanced painting course at the University of Virginia. As a female, she could only attend summer classes. There she came under the influence of Alon Bement, an American artist who had trained in Paris, and was a colleague and devotee of Arthur Wesley Dow. Having revolutionized art instruction in the 1890s, Dow instructed students not to imitate nature through rote reproduction. He instead encouraged them to capture life through systematized composition, emphasizing line, shape, color, and the play of light and dark tones. He taught students to make their own aesthetic decisions and to use their personal vision. Dow’s ideas, as transferred through Bement, opened O’Keeffe’s eyes to a new, more authentic way of making art. O’Keeffe would later become Bement’s assistant, and would study with Dow himself at Columbia Teachers College in 1915, where she met a budding photographer, Anita Pollitzer, who would become a life-long friend.

O’Keeffe came to the West for the first time in 1912, after accepting a position to supervise art instruction at the city public school system in Amarillo, Texas. O’Keeffe attempted to teach the high school students Dow’s technique, only to become frustrated when the State of Texas mandated the use of standardized textbooks. The frustration over the Amarillo curriculum led O’Keeffe to leave Texas and accept a teaching position at Columbia College in Columbia, South Carolina. There, O’Keeffe felt freer to impart Dow’s theories to an older, more receptive student population. In her own paintings, O’Keeffe worked through Dow’s techniques, moving toward a highly personalized form of abstraction. By the end of 1915 O’Keeffe mailed to Anita Pollitzer a sheaf of abstract charcoal drawings, which she had worked on during off hours, sometimes late into the night. It was work that was meant to been seen only by herself and close friends. Pollitzer, however, presented the pictures to Alfred Steiglitz, who was impressed with the unknown artist. Steiglitz found that work spoke of an “unusual woman . . . broad minded,” but with “sensitive emotion.” Steiglitz told Pollitzer to tell O’Keeffe that her drawings were the “purest, finest, sincerest things that have entered 291 in a long while.”

Unknown to O’Keeffe, Steiglitz had arranged to place ten of her abstracts in a group show at 291. The next year Steiglitz held the first solo exhibition O’Keeffe’s work. A review of her second show, published in the Christian Science Monitor, commented that “her strange art affects variously and some not all… artists especially wonder at its technical resourcefulness for dealing what hitherto has been deemed the inexpressible. Now perhaps for the first time in art’s history, the style is the woman.”

40 The Columbia, South Carolina job was closer to her family and her mother, whose health was failing.
41 During this period, O’Keeffe returned to Charlottesville each summer to teach drawing at the University of Virginia.
O'Keeffe returned to Texas in 1916 to run the art department of West Texas State Normal College in Canyon, a plains-ranching town twenty miles south of Amarillo. There, she discovered Palo Duro Canyon, a deep, Grand Canyon-like gorge sunk into the pancake-flat plains. The canyon’s raw geologic beauty of twisted-sandstone spires and multicolored cliffs attracted the artist’s eye. In 1917, O’Keeffe got her first glimpse of New Mexico during a brief train stop in Santa Fe while returning from a trip to Colorado with her sister. “I loved it immediately,” O’Keeffe later recalled.44 “From then on I was always on my way back.”

O’Keeffe resigned her position in Texas and moved to New York. By this time, Stieglitz and O’Keeffe were entwined in an epistolary romance that turned into a physical relationship. Ensconced in a small studio on 59th Street, O’Keeffe continued to develop her form of abstraction, but it became a struggle as critics began view her work through the lens of Freudian psychology and female eroticism. Paintings produced in the 59th Street studio and the summer house at Lake George were exhibited in 1923 as a one-hundred-piece show at the Anderson Galleries, New York. Stieglitz, who arranged the show, made sure it was understood that he was responsible for discovering the painter, with handbills that announced, “Alfred Stieglitz Presents One Hundred Pictures . . . by Georgia O’Keeffe, American.”

In 1923 O’Keeffe described her lack of control over her art and her hopes for the future:

I decided I was a very stupid fool not to at least paint as I wanted to, and saying what I wanted to when I painted, as that seemed to be the only thing I could do that didn’t concern anybody but myself… I found that I could say things with color and shapes that I couldn’t say in any other way—things that I had no words for. 45

After Stieglitz divorced his first wife, he and O’Keeffe married on December 11, 1924 in a quiet civil ceremony. He was 61; she was 37. In New York, the couple became an art world powerhouse, with Stieglitz showing her work often in his gallery and in galleries owned by friends. Stieglitz associated with noted modernists, including Paul Strand, John Marin, Arthur Dove, and Marsden Hartley. Some would influence O’Keeffe and some would become lifelong friends. Stieglitz cultivated a heady intellectual and cultural atmosphere that broadened O’Keeffe’s worldview. But there was always an underlying impulse within her to work against it.

The mid-1920s was a productive time for O’Keeffe. New York’s urban environment, as seen from their apartment on the 30th floor of the Shelton Hotel, entranced her. She painted small scenes of city rooftops and urban night skies and vertical paintings of towering skyscrapers, of which Radiator Building—Night, New York (1927) is the most famous. The work brought back a form of realism O’Keeffe had abandoned years earlier. But routine began to set in. She and

45 Quote appears in The Capital Times, (Madison Wisconsin), February 2, 1923, 3
Stieglitz dressed similarly in black, ate together at the same neighborhood cafeterias in midtown Manhattan, and started an annual summer trek to his family retreat at Lake George. This predictability and her husband’s infidelity led O’Keeffe back to New Mexico, where sought a place to paint and produce work that didn’t concern anyone but herself.

**O’Keeffe’s first visit to New Mexico**

By the late 1920s, O’Keeffe began to find Stieglitz’s routine stifling. As if by clockwork, every spring Stieglitz and O’Keeffe left Manhattan to summer at his family estate at Lake George, in the Adirondack Mountains of upstate New York. Given the name “Oaklawn,” it was one many summer houses on to the lake, populated seasonally by upper-class New Yorkers. The two-story frame house was stuffed with upholstered Victorian furniture, paintings in ornate gilt frames, along with classical marble busts, and darkened by heavy drapes. O’Keeffe later characterized Oaklawn’s furnishings as “horrible atrocities jumbled together.”

Stieglitz and O’Keeffe did not stay in the Victorian home, but in a small farmhouse on the estate they dubbed the “Hill.”

With the death of Stieglitz’s mother in 1922, the family sold Oaklawn and converted the farmhouse into their main summer home. O’Keeffe’s duties at the Hill included “opening up” the house for Stieglitz’s family, which required dusting, painting, washing floors, laundry, and other tasks necessary to get it ready for the season. The work was humbling, but what became an issue to O’Keeffe was Stieglitz’s large, garrulous family, who impinged on her need for privacy and uninterrupted time to produce art. By 1928, she had spent eleven summers with the Stieglitz family at Lake George. O’Keeffe, thinking back on the times, said “I was hard on the family, but they were hard on me.”

During a dinner party in Manhattan in late 1928, a conversation with Mabel Dodge Luhan led O’Keeffe to an alternative to the yearly trek to Lake George. Luhan, an important cultural influence, had set up a salon in Taos, New Mexico, in the early 1920s. She was in New York to try to persuade Stieglitz to show the work of her friend, British painter and aristocrat Dorothy Brett. During the conversation, she invited both Stieglitz and O’Keeffe to her Taos salon. Luhan’s magnetism, coupled with O’Keeffe’s restlessness, planted a seed that led the artist to visit New Mexico the following summer.

In spring 1929 the idea of Taos was interrupted temporarily by O’Keeffe’s impulse to travel to Europe with Stieglitz. In the end he demurred, leaving her with the withering prospect of returning to Lake George once again.

On May 1, 1929, at the age of 41, O’Keeffe and Rebecca “Beck” Strand, wife of painter Paul Strand, left New York to travel by train to New Mexico. O’Keeffe had packed a trunk of painting supplies to last a few months. Reaching Santa Fe, O’Keeffe and Strand took a Harvey

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46 Quote appears in Lisle, *Portrait of an Artist*, 117.
House Indian Detours trip, visiting some of the nearby pueblos. At San Felipe Pueblo, south of Santa Fe, they happened to meet Mabel and husband Tony Luhan during a corn dance. Lujan urged them to travel to Taos that day, which required the Easterners to cut short their time in Santa Fe.49

In Taos, the Luhans had built a large rambling home called Los Gallos, where Mabel gathered a salon of like-minded artists, writers, and thinkers like those she had put together in Florence, Italy and in Greenwich Village. The daughter of Charles Ganson, a wealthy banker, Mabel Luhan became a “collector” of talent, and one of the country’s most influential patrons of art. At Los Gallos she created a colony, hosting famous artists and writers, including Mary Austin, Marsden Hartley, Edward Weston, Willa Cather, D. H. Lawrence, Paul Strand, Jean Toomer, and Ansel Adams.

Luhan put Strand and O’Keeffe in the Pink House, a guest cottage separated from Los Gallos by an alfalfa field.50 O’Keeffe was given a small adobe building shaded by cottonwoods to use as her studio. Almost immediately, she found new inspiration in New Mexico. She told friends she felt invigorated in her new setting and wrote to Henry McBride, art critic for the New York Sun:

I am having a wonderful time—such a wonderful time that I don’t care if Europe falls off the map or out of the world—or where it goes to . . . You know I never feel at home in the East like I do out here—and finally feeling in the right place again—I feel like myself—and I like it—and I like what Mabel has dug up out of the Earth here . . . No one who hasn’t seen it and who hasn’t seen her can know much about this Taos Myth—It is just unbelievable—One perfect day after another—everyone going like mad after something—even if it is only sitting in the sun.51

O’Keeffe, who visited Taos Pueblo and other nearby locales, painted productively that summer. She created several significant pieces, including Black Hollyhock, Blue Larkspur (1929), a semi-abstract painting of native flowers that lined the path to her guesthouse. Trips to Taos introduced the artist to traditional Native American and Hispano architecture and cultural symbols that would work their way into the paintings Taos Pueblo (1929), The Wooden Virgin (1929), and Black Cross with Red Sky (1929). O’Keeffe took particular interest in the lumpy yet dignified massing of the San Francisco de Asis Mission Church south of Taos, filling her sketchbook with various renderings of the church. In Rancho Church No 1. (1929), O’Keeffe captures the building’s soft adobe lines in an abstract composition. Other outings were far more ambitious, including a trip to the Grand Canyon. For the first time on one of the adventures, O’Keeffe saw the area around Abiquiu, which, as she wrote to Beck Strand on the train back to New York, struck her as “very beautiful.”52

50 Lisle, Portrait of an Artist, 218.
51 Quote appears in Cowart and Hamilton, Georgia O’Keeffe, 189.
52 Quote appears in Ibid., 193.
In August 1929, toward the end of her stay at Los Gallos, O’Keeffe wrote a letter thanking Mabel Dodge Luhan: “I wish I could tell you how important these months have been to me—Maybe you know…. it is some thing [sic] so perfect – so perfect for ending this and beginning a new thing—It seems so perfect that I wonder—is it just a dream that I make up—”53 On the train returning to New York, O’Keeffe wrote a letter to her longtime friend, Ettie Stettheimer, capturing this “new thing” that was aroused in New Mexico:

I have had four months west and it seems to be all that I needed—It has been like the wind and the sun—there doesn’t seem to have been a crack of the waking day or night that wasn’t full. . . . I feel so alive that I am apt to crack at any moment – I have frozen in the mountains in rain and hail—and slept out under the stars—and cooked and burned on the desert . . . my nose has peeled and my all my bones have been sore from riding – I drove with friends through Arizona—Utah—Colorado—New Mexico till the thought of a wheel under me makes me want to hold my head. —I got a new Ford and learned to drive it—I even painted—and I laughed a great deal—I went every place I had time to go. . . .54

In New York, Stieglitz exhibited twenty-seven of his wife’s paintings at his new gallery, An American Place. Nineteen of the works had been painted in New Mexico, images of crosses, Native American kachinas, and The Lawrence Tree (1929), an upward, nighttime view of a dark ponderosa pine on the Taos County ranch of author D. H. Lawrence. The paintings revealed the color, vibrancy, and the mystery of the American Southwest.

O’Keeffe returned to Los Gallos in Taos the following summer, where she produced a group of abstract-flower compositions and enjoyed the freedom from the anxieties of New York and the complicated relationship with her husband. In 1931 the artist returned to New Mexico to seek further immersion into the landscape and minimize her social contacts. As characterized by Abiquiu historian Lesley Poling-Kempes, “O’Keeffe wanted the New Mexican landscape but not the disruptive social life that swirled around Luhan and among the artists and intellectuals who moved between Taos and Santa Fe.”55 In fall 1930 O’Keeffe wrote to Dorothy Brett in the fall of 1930 that the “Taos country—it is so beautiful—and so poisonous—the only way to live life in it is to strictly mind your own business. . . . Most of the human side of it is not worth thinking about.”56

O’Keeffe, seeking to avoid the Taos crowd, stayed at a dude ranch along the Rio Grande, near Española on the main highway between Santa Fe and Taos. New Mexico, similar to other Western states, had a sizeable population of dude ranches, places where wealthy Easterners played at being cowboys. Spurred on by cowboy movies, and advertised heavily by the

53 Quote appears in Ibid., 192.
54 Quote appears in Anita Pollitzer, A Woman on Paper, 220.
56 Quote appears in Cowart and Hamilton, Georgia O’Keeffe, 201.
O’Keeffe, Georgia, Ghost Ranch House

Name of Property: O’Keeffe, Georgia, Ghost Ranch House

County and State: Rio Arriba, New Mexico

Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Railway, dude ranches in New Mexico offered a means of roughing it amidst colorful scenery. O’Keeffe chose the H & M Ranch as her summer home for during the summer of 1931. It sat on the west side of the Rio Grande in a little town called Alcalde. It was shaded by tall cottonwoods, with fields nearby planted in alfalfa. O’Keeffe’s friend, Marie Garland, operated the ranch. A former Boston socialite and member of the Taos circle, Garland was married to Henwar Rodakiewicz, an independent film director and editor. O'Keeffe had met both on her trip to Grand Canyon two years earlier. That summer, O’Keeffe mostly avoided her fellow guests. She instead rambled across the countryside in her black Model A Ford. With its high windows and swivel seats, O’Keeffe used the car as an open-air studio. Almost every morning, she left the dude ranch and drove west along the Chama River toward the village of Abiquiu, the “beautiful” place of colorful cliffs she had first seen in 1929. The oil painting, The Mountain, New Mexico (1931), featuring an orange, eroded hillside, may have been painted near Abiquiu. On her return to Lake George in July 1929, O’Keeffe wrote to her friend, New Mexico artist Vernon R. Hunter: “I spent all but two weeks driving out toward a place called Abiquiu—painting and painting. I think I never had a better time painting—and never worked more steadily and never loved the country more.” “Here,” referring to Lake George, “I feel smothered with green. . . . Everything is soft here—I do not work. . . . I walk much and endure the green and that is about all there is to it.” O’Keeffe ended her communication to Hunter by asking him to “Give my love to the wind and the big spaces.”

By the early 1930s O’Keeffe’s love and longing for the Southwest had intensified. Other than her connection to her husband, and the gallery that showed her work, New York no longer held appeal. The New Mexico landscape captivated her and took on a personal, symbolic meaning. Her first totems of the arid land were bleached bones she found during her painting treks. She shipped a barrelful of bones to New York to paint in her penthouse studio. Thinking on this years later O’Keeffe wrote: “When I came to New Mexico in the summer of 1929, I was so crazy about the country that I thought, how can I take part of it with me to work on? There was nothing to see in the land in the way of a flower. There were just dry white bones.”

That year at Lake George, O’Keeffe painted the iconic Cow’s Skull: Red, White and Blue (1931), rendered a cattle skull placed across the colors of the American flag. The painting was O’Keeffe’s first major piece that was influenced by the desert. Later, writing in her autobiography, the artist saw the painting as her shift toward a purely American idiom. Wondering how the “Great American Thing” was ever going to take off given the apparent need for most New York artists to emulate Europe, O’Keeffe thought: “I’ll make an American

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57 Lesley Poling-Kempes, Ghost Ranch (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2005), 114.
58 Quote appears in Cowart and Hamilton, Georgia O’Keeffe, 204.
59 Ibid.
60 Quote appears in John Loengard, Georgia O’Keeffe at Ghost Ranch: a photo essay (New York: Stewart, Tabori and Chang, 1995), Plate 1.
In late December 1931, in an exhibition of mostly O’Keeffe bone paintings, her friend, art critic Henry McBride, wrote: “Looking at these original works purely from the painting angle they are Miss O’Keeffe’s best, and for my part I imagine that she saw these ghostly relics merely as elegant shapes charged with solemn mystery.” Other critics, however, saw the bleached bones in a Freudian sense, as a message of death and destruction, which O’Keeffe repeatedly denied.

In 1932, O’Keeffe elected to stay at Lake George that summer rather than return to New Mexico. There, she spent time with Stieglitz’s niece, Georgia Engelhard, hiking, horseback riding, and painting together in the countryside. In an attempt to escape the family, she and Engelhard made an extended trip to Canada in O’Keeffe’s Ford. On the Gaspé Peninsula, O’Keeffe made an intriguing series of paintings of vernacular barns. Some painted white, some black-gray, but each realistic as to their form and detail.

O’Keeffe skipped New Mexico the next year in 1933, due to an illness characterized as psychoneurosis. In early February she was admitted to Doctors Hospital. She was a patient until March, when she was discharged to attend the opening of her new exhibition at An American Place. She then spent a month recuperating in Bermuda. Staying with friend, Marjorie Content, O’Keeffe spent long hours walking the beach, bicycling, and rock climbing. Returning to New York, O’Keeffe headed to Lake George. She did not paint, but instead swam in the lake every day, and sat by herself listening to a recording of Beethoven’s piano sonatas on the family’s Victrola. This was among O’Keeffe last visits with Stieglitz to the “Hill” at Lake George.

The Development of Ghost Ranch

In the summer 1934, after a week-long visit to Lake George, O’Keeffe and Marjorie Content took off for New Mexico in the artist’s well-traveled Model A. They returned to H & M Ranch in Alcalde. Marjorie would later be joined by her husband, Jean Toomer, an African American poet of the Harlem Renaissance whom O’Keeffe had first met in New York. She resumed her explorations of the area west of Alcalde along the winding Chama River, traveling as far as Abiquiu.

She learned of the colorful mesas west of Abiquiu at a party in New York the previous winter. David McAlpin, a photographer and grandnephew of John D. Rockefeller, had told O’Keeffe

62 Quote appears in Robinson, Georgia O’Keeffe, 368.
64 Hogrefe, O’Keeffe, 168.
65 Ibid., 169.
about the Piedra Lumbre plateau—a spectacular, rainbow-hued rock formation about fifteen miles northwest of Abiquiu. 66  Below Piedra Lumbre lived two of McAlpin’s former Princeton neighbors, Arthur and Brownie Pack, who ran a dude ranch.  O’Keeffe was intrigued with McAlpin’s description of the Piedra Lumbre and discovered the rock formation a month later in July. 67

Ghost Ranch, a dude ranch northwest of Abiquiu and below the Piedra Lumbre, was a destination for dude ranchers during the Great Depression, when only the wealthy could travel for pleasure. The remote ranch was established by Bostonian Caroline Bishop Stanley. Stanley, for nearly two decades, operated dude ranches in New Mexico, including San Gabriel Ranch, a horse-pack retreat in Alcalde, and, with her husband, Richard “Dick” Leroy Pfaffle, Bishop’s Ranch near Santa Fe. The stock market crash in 1929 had decimated most of New Mexico’s dude resorts, but San Gabriel Ranch continued to operate until 1931. 68

Stanley opened the new dude ranch on an old homestead near Abiquiu that Dick Pfaffle had acquired during a poker game in 1928. 69  The ranch had been one of the many holdings of the Salazar family, sheep farmers, who lived in the Piedra Lumbre basin for generations. 70  The homestead, which sat at the head of Yeso Creek, was called by locals El Rancho del los Brujos (Ranch of the Male Witches or Sorcerers), because of murders connected to cattle rustling in the 19th century. Stanley’s new ranch included a rundown three-room adobe house and a corral. Stanley developed the property into a dude ranch by building a ranch headquarters, bunkhouse, dining room, and a few guest quarters. 71  She worked with a local carpenter and home-builder, Elbert E. “Ted” Peabody, to sketch out the development. Born in 1902, in Iowa, Elbert Ellsworth Peabody came to New Mexico with his parents and two brothers to homestead in the Estancia Valley, southeast of Albuquerque. His father, Henry Royce Peabody, was also a carpenter. 72

Stanley had previously worked with Ted Peabody, during the restoration of Los Luceros, a large 19th-century hacienda in Alcalde owned by Mary Cabot Wheelwright. 73  He had also built a few structures at the earlier San Gabriel Ranch and would later work as a general contractor on school projects and Española’s first hospital. 74  It is probable that the design and styling of the Ghost Ranch buildings was a joint effort between the owner and the experienced builder.

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66 Poling-Kempes, Ghost Ranch, 107.
67 Ibid. Various sources give different dates for her arrival in New Mexico.
68 Santa Fe New Mexican, June 30, 1931, 6. San Gabriel Ranch would reopen after the Depression, under the ownership of Pfaffle and his second wife, Margaret.
70 Ibid., 288.
71 Ibid., 295.
73 Poling-Kempes, Ladies of the Canyons, 295.
74 Peabody, telephone conversation with John W. Murphey.
By 1933 Stanley had completed the nucleus of the new dude ranch. A newspaper article said that she hoped to “‘colonize’” the property with “small homes for her friends.”75 Initially called San Gabriel and later called Ghost Ranch, the ranch opened in the summer of 1933. It offered long pack-horse trips across its 17,000 acres, and a range of accommodations—starting with tent houses at $25 a week and for wealthier patrons, adobe casitas with private baths for $45 a week.76 As Stanley had hoped, the new dude ranch attracted former visitors of her earlier Alcalde retreat and a few luminaries, including the polar explorer Lincoln Ellsworth.77 Stanley’s colony of friends would soon change with the arrival of Arthur Pack, a wealthy naturalist, writer, and editor of Nature Magazine.

Arthur Pack, who was born in Cleveland, Ohio, in 1893 attended Williams College, and later Harvard, receiving a degree in business. Pack’s wealth derived from the family’s vast logging holdings in Canada and the United States. He started writing conservation-oriented articles in the early 1920s, which were collected in his first book, Our Vanishing Forests (1923).78 With his father’s financial support, he co-founded Nature Magazine the same year. Pack first visited the area in the late 1920s on a photo assignment for the magazine. Learning that Stanley had relocated, Pack sent an inquiry about visiting the new ranch with his family.79

**Rancho de Los Burros at Ghost Ranch**

After the first enchanting night, “under a velvet heaven blazing with stars that seemed so close that one might almost reach up and touch them,” as Pack later recalled, the family decided to acquire property at Ghost Ranch.80 The next day, Stanley and Pack walked the ranch, looking for an appropriate site for Pack to build a house. They selected a location between the two geologic “chimneys,” an area of gently sloping terrain under the yellow-and-pink cliffs. Pack reportedly bought the 390-acre parcel, including the homesite, the same day.81 Pack worked with Stanley and her builder, Ted Peabody, to design a compact U-shaped patio-oriented house, with a wide view of Cerro Pedernal to the south. Pack recalled Peabody, as the “boss carpenter,” was given a salary of $210 a month to supervise construction.82 Peabody hired local Hispanic craftsmen from nearby communities of Abiquiu, Youngsville, and Coyote to build the house. From Pack’s memory, the craftsmen were paid two dollars a day for their work. Local women did the finish plasterwork, smoothing it with their bare hands. The house, completed in late 1933, included room for Pack, his wife Brownie, and their three children. The family settled into the

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75 “25 Years Ago,” Santa Fe New Mexican, July 17, 1958, 6. The reprint of the news account suggests that the first phase of Ghost Ranch was finished by July, 1933.
76 “San Gabriel Dude Ranch Increases in Capacity,” Indianapolis Sunday Star, July 23, 1933, 44. The article indicates that Stanley was working with the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Railway to promote the dude ranch.
77 “Espanola Valley News,” Santa Fe New Mexican, April 21, 1933, 5.
78 Poling-Kempes, Valley of the Shining Stone,155.
79 Ibid., 154.
81 Poling-Kempes, Valley of the Shining Stone, 156.
82 Pack, We Called it Ghost Ranch, 27 and 54.
O’Keeffe, Georgia, Ghost Ranch House
Name of Property: O’Keeffe, Georgia, Ghost Ranch House
County and State: Rio Arriba, New Mexico

house over Christmas vacation. Pack dubbed the home, Rancho de los Burros, a play on El Rancho del los Brujos and a tribute to the wild burros that his children kept as pets.

Pack, learning of Stanley’s financial hardship, bought the entire Ghost Ranch property in 1935, and took over management of the retreat. Pack and Stanley initially started a cattle concern, the Piedra Lumbre Cattle Company, with some 500 head of cattle, but this proved to be more speculative than good business during a period of intense drought. By the mid-1930s, Pack had increased his holdings at Ghost Ranch by 15,000 acres by acquiring land from the surrounding Piedra Lumbre Land Grant. He plowed more money into developing the dude ranch, building an electric plant and an airstrip. He turned Stanley’s colony of friends into a retreat for the wealthy. He charged $80 a week per person to stay at Ghost Ranch, which, as he admitted later, was “high in those days.” The relaxed atmosphere was promoted in a Ghost Ranch brochure, which stated that “Cotton shirts and trousers or levis are worn by women and men alike all day long.”

First visit to Ghost Ranch

O’Keeffe, on learning there was an opening at Ghost Ranch, gathered her belongs at H & M and traveled to Ghost Ranch. She was given a one-room cottage with board floors and a kerosene lamp. During her stay, she moved into a casita, facing onto a garden, where she spent the rest of the summer painting. The surrounding landscape, with its orange and buff-colored cliffs, sculpted forms, and wide-open views, delighted the artist. The summer’s work resulted in a production of landscape paintings, including Small Purple Hills (1934) and Purple Hills Ghost Ranch–2/Purple Hills No. II (1934).

The following year paintings from the Ghost Ranch visit and works from 1919 to 1934, were shown at An American Place. Art critic and O’Keeffe biographer Roxana Robinson considers the paintings of this period to reveal a maturation in the artist’s approach to landscapes:

As she knew, it took her some time to work through the purely objective phase for recording a landscape, and many of the early landscapes of New Mexico have an unrealized quality to them. . . . By the middle of the thirties, however, she had achieved a deep intuitive response to the countryside, and the paintings began to resonate.

83 Spud Johnson, “In Old Santa Fe,” Santa Fe New Mexican, January 3, 1964, 4; Polling-Kempes, Valley of the Shining Stone, 156.
84 Pack, We Called it Ghost Ranch, 27.
85 Ibid., 31.
87 Pack, We Called it Ghost Ranch, 54.
88 “Ghost Ranch,” undated brochure, no page.
89 Pollitzer, A Woman on Paper, 217.
90 Robison, Georgia O’Keeffe, 455.
O’Keeffe returned to New Mexico in 1935, driving with her friend Loren Mozeley, a young New Mexican artist who would later direct the Harwood Foundation art school in Taos. With no room at Ghost Ranch—O’Keeffe never made arrangements beforehand—she stayed again at the H & M Ranch in Alcalde. When a room opened in August, O’Keeffe relocated to Ghost Ranch. The artist traveled widely that summer, making trips with friends to Chaco Canyon, Canyon de Chelly, and points of interest across northern New Mexico. Her summer, which lasted six months, was a productive period in which the artist renewed the exploration of her new surroundings through painting. At Ghost Ranch, she continued to paint the power of the landscape, creating *Purple Hills* (1935), which simplified details of her earlier painting on the subject, *Red Hills Series II* (1935), and *Hill, New Mexico* (1935). The latter is a detail of an unusual formation that appears like a peach-colored, snow-capped mountain. The "big pink hill," as O'Keeffe later called it, stood close to the Pack family house.

**Skulls and Flowers**

The same year, O’Keeffe would begin her second phase of using bleached desert bones as a subject. Many paintings focused on smaller animal skulls, such as deer, antelope, and ram, which horns intact. Others included skulls without horns. O’Keeffe would place these natural forms in the center of the canvas juxtaposed against a blue sky, a distant hill formation, or a flower. One of her earlier works, *Ram’s Head, White Hollyhock—Hills* (1935), juxtaposed a small skull with seemingly oversized horns in front of brooding gray clouds, flanked by rumpled brown hills. Next to the skull floats a single white hollyhock blossom, lit by a seemingly second source of light. In her autobiography, O’Keeffe wrote of the inspiration for the painting:

> I had painted those hills from the car in bright sunlight and had failed dismally but I could see them—farther away—from my window in the rain. So I tried again. They seemed right with the Ram’s Head. . . . I don’t remember where I picked up the head—or the hollyhock. Flowers were planted among the vegetables in the garden between the house and the hills and I probably picked the hollyhock one day as I walked past. My paintings sometimes grow by pieces from what is around.  

91 O’Keeffe, *Georgia O’Keeffe*, 176.

In early 1936, a selection of O’Keeffe’s New Mexico paintings mostly executed at Ghost Ranch was exhibited at An American Place. This survey included a few still-life paintings, five landscape paintings, and two pictures of animal skull pieces. Lewis Mumford, writing for the *New Yorker*, stated:

> The epitome of the whole show is the painting of the ram’s head with its horns acting like wings, lifted up against the gray, windswept clouds; at its side is a white hollyhock. In conception and execution this is one of the most brilliant

91 O’Keeffe, *Georgia O’Keeffe*, 176.
paintings O’Keeffe has done. Not only is it a piece of consummate craftsmanship, but it likewise possesses that mysterious force, that hold upon the hidden soul, which distinguishes important communications from casual reports of the eye. Here one notes the vast differences between those who are able to draw upon the unconscious because they face life at every level, and the Surrealists who have been playing with the unconscious—O’Keeffe uses themes and juxtapositions no less expected than those of the Surrealists but she uses them in a fashion that makes them seem inevitable and natural, grave and beautiful.92

O’Keeffe returned to Ghost Ranch in 1936 and 1937, where she continued to paint skulls. Other paintings include, *Mule’s Skull with Pink Poinsettia* (1936), *From the Faraway, Nearby* (1937), *Summer Days* (1936), *Deer’s Skull with Pedernal* (1936), and *Ram’s Head, Blue Moring Glory* (1938).

**O’Keeffe visits the Pack House**

By 1937 O’Keeffe had moved into to the former Pack House, also called Rancho de los Burros, making it her own. She had arrived in mid-July without a reservation and initially wanted to take over one of the casitas, but the ranch was entirely booked.93 Arthur Pack suggested moving into Rancho de los Burros, which he had since vacated. By this time the house under the colored cliffs was used only by a few of the ranch staff. Years later O’Keeffe recalled that when she first saw the adobe house, “I knew I must have it.”94

During the summer 1937, O’Keeffe, without ownership of the house, made a significant change to one of the windows. The painter wanted more light as she converted the living room into her studio. To accomplish this, she removed a set of sash windows east of the fireplace. In their place the artists inserted a large, six-light fixed window, made of tall, rectangular lights. Judging from period photographs, the new window served its purpose, flooding the northeast corner of the studio with diffused light. It also provided a better view of the cliffs behind the house. O’Keeffe mentioned the change in a September 11, 1937 letter to Ettie Stettheimer: “I fixed a room for myself in a house no one else wanted and I think it the best on the place—put in a big window so it is very light.”95 That year O’Keeffe painted *The House I Live In* (1937). The painting of the north façade of Rancho de los Burros includes the new window and the flat-topped mountain called Cerro Pedernal.

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94 Quote appears in Ibid.
95 Quote appears in Lynes and Lopez, *Georgia O’Keeffe and Houses*, 25.
O’Keeffe and the Landscape at Ghost Ranch

In a letter to Stieglitz in fall 1937 the artist reveals her persistence at painting and her immersion into the Ghost Ranch landscape:

The wind is blowing hard … I have been painting all day—a painting that should be very good if I can really get it right—another cedar tree—a dead one, against red earth, but red is more difficult—if this one doesn’t go I’ll try it again. At five I walked—I climbed way up on a pale green hill where I could look around at the red, yellow, purple formations—miles all around—the color all intensified by the pale grey green I was standing on. It was wonderful—you would have loved it too—96

The following year, O’Keeffe’s work at Ghost Ranch became known to the world when photographer Ansel Adams, whom O’Keeffe had first met at Luhan’s salon in Taos, made a prolonged visit. O’Keeffe and Adams, with David McAlpin and Orville Cox, a cowhand at the ranch, toured western New Mexico and old mining towns in southern Colorado. Adams snapped dozens of photographs of O’Keeffe on the road and at the ranch. Many of the pictures appeared in the February 14, 1938 issue of Life, under the title, “Georgia O’Keeffe Turns Dead Bones to Live Art.” The first three pages of the piece showed a relaxed O’Keeffe, posed with various skulls and bones. Given the prolonged drought ravaging the Southwest, the landscape around Ghost Ranch was peppered with cattle carcasses. The most startling is a photo of the artist dressed in dark jeans and a black bolero, holding in one hand a fully ribbed skeleton and in the other, a severed cow’s skull, still covered with hair. The article suggested that many might find a painting of a “horse’s skull and pink rose. . . . as strangely curious.”98 But it went on to confirm that “American experts, collectors and connoisseurs will vehemently assure the doubters that this is a thing of real beauty and rare worth” indicating that the painting, Horse’s Skull with Pink Rose (1931), was likely worth $5,000. With Life’s circulation of one million copies, O’Keeffe and her work at Ghost Ranch became known worldwide.

O’Keeffe purchases the Pack House

O’Keeffe convinced Pack to sell her his family home in August of 1940.99 On August 15, she wrote a long letter to Ettie Stettheimer in which she described her attachment to Ghost Ranch and her need for solitude: “I have bought a house out here—the one I have lived in the past three

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96 Quote appears in Pollitzer, A Woman on Paper, 224-225.
97 Lisle, Portrait of an Artist, 283.
98 Ansel Adams, photographer, “Georgia O’Keeffe Turns Dead Bones to Live Art,” Life (February 14, 1938), 28.
99 It is unclear when the actual sale of the property occurred. A deed was recorded for the property on October 30, 1940. O’Keeffe’s letter to Ettie Stettheimer and the subsequent survey of the property suggest it was purchased in August.
years here—it is for me a nice house and I like being here.” The letter continues, relaying a story about O’Keeffe’s recent weekend visit to Taos, where she spent time with friends Dorothy Brett, Beck Strand, Spud Johnson, and Frieda Lawrence. But after the fun frippery she was “delighted to get back up here [Ghost Ranch]—so far away that no one ever comes—I suppose I am odd but I do like the far away—You would probably hate it—Colored earth—rattlesnakes and a Siamese Kitten for news is all I have—With all the earth being rearranged as it is these days I sometimes wonder if I am crazy to walk off and leave it and sit down in the far away country as I have – at least it is quiet here—” O’Keeffe, concluded the letter by writing: “Too bad you don’t like the nothing the way I do.”

The following day, O’Keeffe met with a Santa Fe surveyor to record her new piece of solitude. Surveyed on August 16, 1940, the plat recorded a roughly rectangular, eight-acre parcel. Its northeast corner, near the pumphouse that Pack had built, was complicated by several intersecting property lines. These included another parcel held by Pack and the boundaries of the Carson National Forest and the Piedra Lumbre Land Grant. To the northwest was located land that Carol Stanley had sold earlier to Chicago-architect and city-planner Edward H. Bennett. The Bennetts built a similar U-shape adobe summer house in 1934.

O’Keeffe, settling into her new home, began to paint again, quickly producing four sketches and three paintings of her surroundings. These include *Red and Yellow Cliffs Ghost Ranch* (1940), depicting the sulfur and pink-hued cliffs forming her backyard, and two paintings of the east portal titled *The Patio—No. I* (1940) and *Patio No. II* (1940). The latter works, stripped of details, indicate the design of the portal in 1940, with its white-washed plastered walls and natural-adobe finished parapet and chimney. O’Keeffe also ventured beyond the property, to paint at Plaza Blanca, a white, narrow canyon east of Abiquiu where she would create *From the White Place* (1940).

**Georgia O’Keeffe hires Maria Chabot**

O’Keeffe took a late fall trip to Navajo lands, where she camped and watched a fire dance. Upon her return, she learned that Stieglitz had suffered a minor heart attack. Despite this event, she stayed longer than usual in New Mexico, returning to New York only in December. Much of this time was spent studying the house for renovations the artist would undertake the following year. In 1941, upon returning to Ghost Ranch, the challenges of running a household, executing the planned renovations, and allotting time for painting struck O’Keeffe. The artist hired Maria Chabot to manage the household at Ghost House. O’Keeffe first met Chabot, a twenty-six-year-old Texan who spoke fluent Spanish, in 1940 at a lunch held at Los Luceros, the

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100 Quote appears in Cowart and Hamilton, *Georgia O’Keeffe*, 230. Subsequent quotes are from the same letter and source.

101 There has been speculation that Bennett’s firm designed Rancho del los Burros. Abiquiu historian, Lesley Poling-Kempes, who interviewed Bennett descendants in preparation for her book on Ghost Ranch, does not give credence to the idea. Lesley Poling-Kempes, email communication to John W. Murphey, July 23, 2019.

102 Drohojowska-Philp, *Full Bloom*, 388.
Wheelwright estate where Chabot was working on her writing. Born in 1913, in San Antonio, Texas, her paternal grandfather, Charles S. Chabot, served as the English ambassador to Mexico in the 1860s. Her father, Charles J. Chabot, was born in Mexico, and worked as a merchant. Charles lost his second wife and a son in a double drowning in 1907. Mary Lee, as she was originally named, was the only child of Charles and his third wife, Olive Chabot.

At Brackenridge High School, in San Antonio, Chabot kept her hair short in a masculine style, and dressed in a suit and tie for her school photo. After turning 18, she moved to New Mexico, where she became romantically and professionally involved with Dorothy Stewart, a Santa Fe artist and leader in the New Mexico Association for Indian Rights. Following Stewart’s inspiration, Chabot got involved in advocating for Native American rights. An aspiring writer, she had written pieces for the New Mexico Association on Indian Affairs which were published in *New Mexico Magazine*, and a part of the chapter on art for the federal Writers’ Program guide to New Mexico. At Los Luceros, Chabot supervised Wheelwright’s ranch and orchards, learning practical skills in farm machinery and land management. When O'Keeffe met her, the young writer was drafting an article she hoped would be published in *The Atlantic Monthly*.

In January 1941, O’Keeffe and Chabot started an epistolary correspondence that lasted until 1949. The letters shed light on their complicated friendship, and the daily lives and personal ambitions of both women. The letters are particularly significant for documenting the day-to-day activities at Ghost Ranch and capture O’Keeffe’s life and work in the mid-1940s, both in New Mexico and New York. Their correspondence began in January 1941, with O’Keeffe critiquing Chabot’s draft article, stating bluntly, “I don’t care for your opening paragraph or for what you write from hearsay.” The letters soon shifted in tone when Chabot learned that O’Keeffe was in need of a housekeeper. Chabot initially tried to entice O’Keeffe to spend the summer with her in Mexico, but began to sell herself as the housekeeper’s replacement.

In an April 7, 1941 letter to Chabot, O’Keeffe outlined her expectation of the arrangement: “I thought you might be willing to do something about the food—not everything—and the shopping—and I pay for everything—we should not to have to go to town more than once a week—maybe once in ten days—” In a response, a few days later, Chabot agreed to the proposal: “I would be glad to keep the house straight—drive—do the shopping and cook, to the best of my ability,” however, conditioning that she “would want definite hours to myself,” indicating she had been working on a book about Indian ceremonies.

O’Keeffe, having settled an arrangement with Chabot, turned to her first major project, repairing the roof, which had been leaking. In a letter to Chabot discussing her arrival, O’Keeffe wrote

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103 Barbara Buhler Lynes and Ann Paden, *Maria Chabot—Georgia O’Keeffe, Correspondence, 1941-1949* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2003), XIV.
104 “Mother and Son Drown,” *Austin Daily Statesman*, August 18, 1907, 2.
107 Quote appears in Ibid.
108 Quote appears in Ibid., 6.
109 Quote appears in Ibid., 7.
that along with the roof, she would have the house finished with cementitious stucco rather than the traditional adobe plaster. O’Keeffe arrived at the change with some regret, writing, “I am sad to say that I think I’ll have it cement plastered to the ground,” stating that her parapets, just mudded the year before, had “almost melted away”— O’Keeffe chose the remedy which many Anglo owners of adobe houses used, modern stucco, rather than plastering with adobe each year.

Chabot, who had some experience with native architecture, bristled at O’Keeffe’s expediency, writing that while the artist suffered with her melted parapets, O’Keeffe would “suffer more with cement plastering—every time you look at it.” O’Keeffe accepted Chabot’s letter “berating cement” and responded practically, attempting to summarize again her expectations of Chabot’s stay: “I don’t mind if you have a radio [as long as] I don’t have to listen to if I don’t want to— As for cooking—a cookbook I have—otherwise only a little commonsense is needed—” Chabot arrived at Rancho de los Burros in late June 1941 to find, as she recalled in a 1991 oral history, O’Keeffe “standing out in the patio, screaming at [Ted Peabody],” over his stucco technique. “She did not want a straight line – she wanted it to ripple.” Looking back on her arrival, Chabot thought that her first day with O’Keeffe was like “jumping from the skillet into the fire.” During that year, 1941, O’Keeffe concentrated on improving the house, with Chabot supervising the work. Aside from the stucco and roof, doors and windows needed to be painted and repaired. Chabot was allowed to make her own adjustments to the house, building adobe bancos, including one in the dining room.

That summer O’Keeffe instructed Chabot on her food preferences and the way she liked to keep her home. The artist taught her helper how to bake bread. O’Keeffe usually awoke at dawn, after which Chabot would prepare a heavy breakfast of eggs, bacon, chili, and toast. Chabot, with experience with farm machinery, instructed O’Keeffe on the operation and maintenance of the house generator, which powered the electrical system and the motor pump for the well. O’Keeffe couldn’t get the pump to activate before Chabot’s arrival, and never was able to start the generator by herself. In addition, Chabot coordinated O’Keeffe’s long painting trips, serving as both driver and companion to distant destinations, such as the Black Place, 150 miles away on the Navajo Reservation. Chabot often found herself acting as O’Keeffe’s sounding board, listening to her anxieties about troubles in New York.

Despite the time O’Keeffe spent to train Chabot, the artist finished 14 pieces during her stay in 1941. Her work, at what she now called Ghost Ranch, included Red Hills and Bones (1941), a large painting which places a vertebrae and pinkish thigh bone in front of one of the reddish, lumped mudstone hills near her house. Other pieces completed in 1941 include a series of

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110 Quote appears in Ibid., 9.
111 Ibid., 9.
112 Quote appears in Ibid., 10.
113 Maria Chabot, interview with Barbara Buhler Lynes, June 8, 1991, Ghost Ranch, transcript, Tape 1, Side 2, 6-7, Georgia O’Keeffe Museum Curatorial Department Research Materials, Georgia O’Keeffe Museum, Santa Fe, New Mexico.
114 Ibid.
115 Chabot, interview with Barbara Buhler Lynes, June 8, 1991, Tape 1, Side 1, 33.
O’Keeffe began to paint in 1936 in a canvas entitled Ghost Ranch Landscape (c.1936). In the painting, Cerro Pedernal is almost obscured by a dull, green pinon tree in the foreground. O’Keeffe returned to the mountain, which she later called “my mountain,” which she painted in a manner similar to Cézanne’s Mont Sainte-Victoire.116 O’Keeffe described the mountain in 1944: “It is hazy—and my mountain floats out light blue in the distance—like a dream . . . ,”117 That summer, Cerro Pedernal became more prominent in O’Keeffe’s paintings of her south-facing landscape. In three variations: Pedernal (1941), My Front Yard, Summer (1941), and Pedernal (1941/1942), the geologic landmark dominates the canvas, with its flat-topped peak looming over a flattened valley below. O’Keeffe’s mountain appeared in twenty-nine drawings and paintings between 1936 and 1958, with most produced at Ghost Ranch.118

O’Keeffe during the War Years

The first years at Ghost Ranch were years of privation. The house didn’t have a source of potable water and the thick, pink-colored liquid that flowed through faucets could only be used for cleaning. Chabot would set out every week to bring back drinking water from Abiquiu.119 Heat was always a problem, as were insects, and the constant threat of rattlesnakes. Additional privation and discomfort arrived with the war, as rationing cut down on the already limited food available in the area. In an upbeat letter to Ettie Stettheimer in 1943, O’Keeffe wrote:

—I am having a very good summer. Am feeling very well and working seems to be going better than in a long time—Living has to be adjusted with the rationing but I manage very well.” O’Keeffe admitted she and Chabot had been eating native weeds to get by, but concluded: “Well—we manage very well—canning and drying and preserving what we can get…120

Chabot, for her part, planted a Victory Garden of green beans. The rationing of gas and rubber additionally affected the painting expeditions. Chabot later recalled that they “saved every ounce of everything, in order to go to the Black Place or the White Place. Food was a secondary factor.”121

118 Lynes and Paden, Maria Chabot—Georgia O’Keeffe, 15, footnote 32; O’Keeffe had her ashes scattered on the peak of Cerro Pedernal.
119 Ibid., 30.
120 Quote appears in Cowart and Hamilton, Georgia O’Keeffe, 234.
121 Chabot, interview with Barbara Buhler Lynes, June 8, 1991, Tape 1, Side 2, 30.
Early Modifications to Ghost Ranch House

O’Keeffe and Chabot worked collaboratively to improve the house. In letters O’Keeffe and Chabot discussed ideas they had to improve the home. In a 1943 letter, O’Keeffe brought up the idea of introducing a casement window to Chabot’s room: “It just occurs to me that there was one more thing I intended doing at the ranch—I was going to put in a casement window—one that would open out in your room in place of the one that shoves up [single-hung sash].” It appears O’Keeffe was trying to improve Chabot’s living situation, as she admitted, “I believe we will find living there very difficult but I want to try one more year. . . .”

Chabot, for her part, had ideas on how to enhance the house. She was against plastering the house with cementitious stucco, writing that “[c]ement has no part in culture.” The apprentice also had ideas about the patio, at one point telling the artist it should be filled in with mud. She introduced the bancos to the interior, a traditional form of seating that was probably unknown to O’Keeffe. In the beginning, Chabot’s main role was supervising the work performed by locals, along with Ted Peabody and his son Henry, who continued to help with larger projects at the dude ranch. Her role as general contractor at Ghost Ranch House is revealed in a 1943 letter, where she informs O’Keeffe of a project to prepare the house for the artist’s arrival:

The [house] is coming along beautifully. I am trying to do it as you would do it. I have three natives, Juanita, Avriliana, and Sabino . . . he [Sabino] has sanded all the west windows and the garage doors. I mixed the paint for him and his with it. The wood has much need of paint—crying for it. I have [put putty] on the big windows.

Other letters reveal Chabot taking initiative by suggesting improvements that O’Keeffe had not ordered. Finding O’Keeffe’s bedroom walls in poor shape, Chabot had them calcimated, writing to O’Keeffe, “I should have written and asked you—but I am taking a chance on your approval.” These and other letters show Chabot’s ability to manage projects. After O’Keeffe left for the season, Chabot remained at the house, packing and crating the paintings the artist had completed that summer to be shipped to New York. Staying through winter, Chabot installed a new generator. In a series of December letters, O’Keeffe instructed Chabot on small details of closing the house for the season, reminding her to cover the chimneys, to nail the windows shut, and—several times—to turn the light off in the garage.
Chabot realized after finishing one season that the constant household duties left little time for her to write. While adoring of O’Keeffe and her genius, the young woman found herself isolated. Her radio did not work, and mail consisted of letters from Stieglitz to O’Keeffe, and for Chabot letters from her mother, which she remembered as “being very angry, feeling I was wasting my youth.”128 Chabot originally refused to take O’Keeffe’s payment for her work. In a letter on the matter, she wrote: “I worked for you because I loved working for you. That’s the only way I ever work at anything—that’s the only way I can—”129 Some biographers have suggested that Chabot had an expectation of something else—whether romantic or a kind of mentorship—but she ultimately blamed her refusal to take the money on her “Texas hardheadedness.”130 In the same letter she said she hoped to come for another summer, stating: “Any manual labor that I can do now while I can make your life easier—I want to do. . . .”131

Fifty years later, with decades to ruminate on their often-complicated relationship, Chabot saw it differently. After returning in 1942 for a second season, Chabot recalled that she felt that she was “fully embroiled now—I can’t escape. And Georgia couldn’t either, for that matter. She depended on me…”132 As remembered by Chabot during the 1991 oral history, the two had their low points at times. One involved a near wrestling match over where Chabot should dispose of the household trash.133 Chabot expected O’Keeffe to assist with some of her duties; O’Keeffe in turn often had issue with her helper’s “pouting,” which affected her time to paint. When Chabot was in a mood, O’Keeffe would warn: “you’re ruining my day.”134

But it was O’Keeffe’s painting that brought the two together for the most harmonious, most productive part of their relationship. Chabot recalled that once the initial house renovation had been completed in 1942, O’Keeffe immediately went into production mode, finding her action and sense of purpose “like a jack hammer.”135 Compared to the “laissez faire” artists of the Santa Fe and Taos colonies, O’Keeffe was always in motion. Once she finished a piece, O’Keeffe would take a walk, and then start on another.136 She reveled in her freedom and the scenic surroundings of her house, what she would start to call “my landscape.” In a 1942 letter to fellow painter Arthur Dove, O’Keeffe wrote:

I wish you could see what I see out the window—the earth pink and yellow cliffs to the north—the full pale moon about to go down in an early morning lavender sky behind a very long beautiful tree covered mesa to the west—pink and purple in the front and the scrubby fine dull cedars—and a feeling of much space—It is a very beautiful world—I wish you could see it.”137

128 Ibid., 42.
129 Ibid., 16.
130 Ibid.
131 Ibid.
132 Ibid., interview with Barbara Buhler Lynes, June 8, 1991, Tape 1, Side 2, 42.
133 Ibid., Tape 2, Side 1, 5.
134 Ibid.44.
135 Ibid., 19.
136 Ibid.
137 Quote appears in Cowart and Hamilton, Georgia O’Keeffe, 233
Despite O’Keeffe’s enchantment with her new freedom and productivity, troubles with Chabot lingered. In 1944, responding to Chabot’s previous “tantrum letter,” In an attempt to obviate another season of potential friction, O’Keeffe wrote to her assistant: “About the ranch this year – once I take hold of anything I do not easily let go and give it up – I have let you run things your way for three years – pretty much your way – I always knew you tried too much – it is your way – maybe you will get over it. I think I’ll try things my way this year – You are welcome to return if you wish but no more of this business of trying to do four or five peoples work.”

Chabot agreed to O’Keeffe’s way, and returned to Ghost Ranch for a fourth season.

In a draft letter to Stieglitz written on her last day at Ghost Ranch, Chabot summed up her experience: “Whatever I have done for Georgia has been a material thing. What she has done for me has been a spiritual thing. That’s the difference – and therein lies my sense of gratitude to her.”

The Pelvis Series

In the mid-1940s, O’Keeffe went back to painting bones, her substitute flowers of the desert. She became particularly interested in using bleached pelvic bones as a framing device. The so-called pelvis series would be the last major chapter of experimentation that O’Keeffe worked through at Ghost Ranch House. She recalled her discovery and exploration of the pelvic bone during a 1967 interview at Ghost Ranch:

“For years in the country the pelvis bones lay about . . . always underfoot – seen and not seen as such things can be . . . I do not remember picking up the first one but I remember … knowing I would be painting them. . . . When I started painting the pelvis bones I was most interested in the holes in the bones – what I saw through them – particularly the blue from holding them up in the sun against the sky as one is apt to do when one seems to have more sky than earth in one’s world.”

O’Keeffe used the pelvic bone, employing either the hip socket or the larger obturator foramen, for these works. As a portal and framing device, the bone allowed O’Keeffe to continue her near-far juxtapositions of objects in space. With its ovoid opening, it became a medium that at first framed the blue sky, and later elements of the landscape including Pedernal peak. O’Keeffe’s pelvis bone paintings ranged from Pelvis (1943), an early work of the series composed of a full pelvic bone with is two obturator foramen working as a window to the sky; to Pelvis IV (1944), using the bone’s opening to frame a small, pale moon; Pelvis Series, Red with

138 Lynes and Paden, Maria Chabot—Georgia O’Keeffe, 164.
139 May 10, 1945, letter from Maria Chabot to Alfred Stieglitz, “Unprocessed Maria Chabot Archive Collection Accrual,” Georgia O’Keeffe Museum Curatorial Department Research Materials, Georgia O’Keeffe Museum, Santa Fe, New Mexico. It is unclear if the letter was ever sent.

140 Quote appears in “Horizons of a Pioneer,” Life, (March 1, 1968), 45.
Yellow (1945), employing a tightly cropped cleft to capture what appears to be the sun; Pelvis Series, Red with Blue (1945), placing a reddish pelvic bone and opening against a blue sky; and finally, Pedernal (1945), representing the most abstract application, where a portion of a hip socket appears to encircle Cerro Pedernal, which is painted the same blue color as the sky above the bone. Some of the pelvis bone paintings appeared in Stieglitz’s last exhibition of the O’Keeffe’s work at An American Place in February 1946.

O’Keeffe continued the pelvic bone series through the late 1940s. By 1946, with Pelvis Series XX (1946), the form became more abstract. Painted in 1948, just prior moving to the Abiquiu House, Pelvis Series (1948) had placed an opening of blue at the center of the canvas with the white bone spreading to all four edges of the painting. According to art critic and journalist Hunter Drohojowska-Philp, with this piece and another that followed, O’Keeffe “create[d] a confusion of space that renders the sky hard and round, while the bone seems a soft cushion of support.”\(^{141}\) In other words, the artist had completed the series, by reversing the subject with the framing device.

### Ghost Ranch captured in Photographs, Memoir, and Film

A session with Santa Fe photographer John Candelario in the summer of 1942 documented O’Keeffe in her routine. Candelario snapped the famous photograph of the artist staring whimsically at a human skull set on a post on the patio. But several photographs taken at a greater distance give a better understanding of the artist and her surroundings. By this time, O’Keeffe had let the patio return to nature. The center walk was missing pieces of flagstone, and native plants sprouted where roses were once tended. Here and there along the patio, O’Keeffe or Chabot had organized stones in small piles and circles. A healthy datura plant, also called Jimson Weed, sprawls near the beginning of the walk. O’Keeffe had painted a similar plant, Jimson Weed (1936) for cosmetics manufacturer Elizabeth Arden for display at her private gym in Manhattan.\(^{142}\) The artist and Chabot coaxed the plant for several years, hoping it would survive the hard winters.

Candelario’s photographs reveal that the portal, aside from the entry to the studio, was still painted or plastered white. The area was mostly free of furniture, without the cedar shelves which she added in the 1960s. A photograph of O’Keeffe and Chabot, both clothed in near identical white dresses, and appearing happy and relaxed, reveals that the picture window near the entry of the studio had been replaced with wood casements. Looking beyond this window, through the studio, it is evident that O’Keeffe had yet to replace the windows west of the fireplace with the large picture window. Another Candelario picture shows the roof topped with dirt in the traditional Hispanic manner and penetrated with a number of rounded chimneys and metal-flue pipes.

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\(^{141}\) Drohojowska-Philp, Full Bloom, 428.

\(^{142}\) Lisle, Portrait of an Artist, 299.
A few years later, a visit from one of O’Keeffe’s close friends, Anita Pollitzer, captures the house in writing. In the summer of 1945, O’Keeffe’s former classmate at Columbia Teachers College made a two-week visit to Ghost Ranch. Recalling the visit, Pollitzer wrote:

I was not prepared — even after Georgia’s descriptions — for the beauty of the hills, the red and black earth, the skies, and, the distance from human habitation. This is wild country.”143 Pollitzer recalls that there was no art hanging on the wall. The only art at the time was the Calder mobile, which made a “leaflike shadow” across the bedroom wall. Pollitzer concluded that the furnishings and fixtures were “models of comfort and simplicity.”144

What was on display were O’Keeffe’s “treasures,” the white cow skull affixed to the patio parapet and a small collection of bones. Pollitzer recalled that much of the time was spent on the patio. “When a storm was approaching,” she writes, “we would take our chairs outside to watch the excitement in the sky. She [O’Keeffe] invited us to climb the ladder to the flat roof to watch the myriad of stars.”145 Pollitzer later wrote a letter that included a hand-drawn sketch of the house layout.146 While reversed in orientation, the crude floor plan is important for understanding its appearance in 1945. Drawings of window symbols at O’Keeffe’s bedroom likely indicate that the large plate-glass windows had been installed. Equally significant, the breakfast nook is not shown, whereas the kitchen occupies the entire northeast corner.

In 1948 O’Keeffe was approached by Henwar Rodakiewicz, the documentary filmmaker and onetime husband of two of her friends, Marie Garland and Peggy Bok. The Polish-American documentarian had received a commission from the New Mexico State Tourism Department to produce a short movie on the area’s cultural attractions. Pushed on by her assistant, Doris Bry, O’Keeffe reluctantly agreed to participate. Produced by a subsidiary of RCA, the short film, “Land of Enchantment: Southwest U.S.A.,” provides a rare glimpse of O’Keeffe’s studio.

Filmed by cinematographer Boris Kaufman with a soundtrack by French composer Marcel Rosenthal, it has the heavy, noir-feeling of documentaries of the period. After a pan of the cliffs behind the home, with violins trembling in the background, the camera cuts to the artist in a smart cotton dress, bending down to pick up a bleached vertebra. Satisfied with the bones, O’Keeffe brings them back to her home, as the narrator introduces her and comments that the harsh desert “reaches to her door.”147

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144 Ibid., 243.
145 Ibid.
The rest of the sequence is shot in O’Keeffe’s studio. The camera scans a long wood plank table aligned with the artist’s equipment: various containers holding brushes; a tackle box stuffed with tubes of paint; antlers, a ratchet brace, knives, a sprig of juniper, a pelvic bone. In the east corner appears to be the same easel that is present today. In the film it holds the canvas, *A Black Bird with Snow-Covered Red Hills* (1946), an abstract representation of a crow in flight, interpreted by some as a symbol of Stieglitz and painted after his death. The footage reveals that O’Keeffe had painted almost everything white—the ceiling and vigas, walls, doors, lintels, and the fireplace.

**The House in Abiquiu**

It became clear by the mid-1940s that Ghost Ranch House, or as O’Keeffe and Chabot called it, “the ranch,” had its limitations. Despite investigations by Chabot, there was no way to improve the water supply, which ran pink and cloudy with minerals. The road to the house was often in poor condition, and its maintenance, according to Chabot, was sometimes held hostage by Arthur Pack, who had a difficult relationship with O’Keeffe. Another problem was the lack of fresh food, particularly vegetables. Before buying the house, O’Keeffe got daily rations of vegetables from a garden at the dude ranch as part of the guest package. After purchasing the property, the artist was no longer welcome to this amenity, which led to bitter feelings toward Pack. Chabot, attempting to solve the problem, looked for available arable land outside Ghost Ranch and eventually planted a small garden near the Pack family’s former corral. This effort failed because of the sun, wind, and rabbits.

In the 1930s Chabot and O’Keeffe discovered a glorious, tumbled-down adobe ruin in the village of Abiquiu that they thought could satisfy O’Keeffe’s need for a larger house with fertile land and an abundant source of water. Located near the end of the village on a point overlooking the Chama River, the ruin was once a large adobe compound believed to have been the home of Spanish-era dandy General José María Chávez. The ramshackle compound had an acequia (irrigation canal) running along its edge and orchards that still bore fruit. Its rooms and courtyards had been turned into pens holding chickens, goats, and pigs.

In 1943 Chabot became nearly consumed with the idea of buying the ruin, only to find out it was owned by the Catholic Church. O’Keeffe and Chabot spent nearly two years negotiating with the church to sell the property. The local parish had planned to build a school on the site, but lacked funds to move forward. The diocese finally relented, selling the property to O’Keeffe in late 1945. With the acquisition, Chabot took on a new and elevated role as O’Keeffe’s general contractor in an ambitious project to rebuild the historic compound. While she at first demurred at O’Keeffe’s request to supervise the project, Chabot later agreed, and approached the project with great enthusiasm.

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148 Drohojowska-Philp, *Full Bloom*, 419.
149 Chabot, interview with Barbara Buhler Lynes, June 8, 1991, Tape 1, Side 1, 38-39.
151 Ibid., 198.
The nearly four-year undertaking not only restored the hacienda but thoroughly modernized aspects of it, converting it into the artist’s primary residence and studio. Recalling her anticipation of working on the project, Chabot stated: “We’d talked about this house — it was our baby — for five years. . . .It was our child.”

O’Keeffe gave Chabot a checking account with a bank in Santa Fe to cover costs. Chabot supervised over thirty workers, and did much of the legwork herself, such as scouting materials. Letters exchanged between the two reveal Chabot making decisions as to how rooms should be reconstructed, and even suggesting the location and design of O’Keeffe’s new studio. Early in the project, Chabot teased O’Keeffe that the artist didn’t “know anything about” her house, suggesting Chabot was in control. In later letters, Chabot overwhelms O’Keeffe with details. O’Keeffe, coordinating a major retrospective exhibit of her work at the Museum of Modern Art, couldn’t give Chabot’s correspondence much attention, and relied on her assistants’ discretion.

When Alfred Stieglitz died on July 13, 1946, Chabot’s role in the renovation became even more prominent as O’Keeffe spent considerable time in New York settling her husband’s estate, and later supervising the development of two memorial exhibitions of his work. O’Keeffe indicated that she would likely need to stay in Manhattan one more winter to finish Stiglitz’s estate, writing, “After that I will stay here — I would like to stay away from the city for a long time —.”

With a cost between $30,000 and $40,000, the renovation was finished in June 1949, creating a new permanent home for O’Keeffe. Chabot was recognized for her role in developing the Abiquiu House by the Georgia O’Keeffe Museum in 1994, naming her a co-collaborator and the main architect, contractor, and garden designer for the project. O’Keeffe moved into the new house in October 1948. In an October 30 letter to Vernon Hunter, she writes nonchalantly:

— I’ve done over an old house in Abiquiu. She then describes the space that Chabot had designed for her: Have a huge studio — white — with a dirt floor — It is like being outdoors — I have two tables ten feet long and four feet wide and two big saw horses and a large desk — and the room seems empty.

As anticipated, O’Keeffe returned to her house in Abiquiu, New Mexico in June 1949. In contrast to Ghost Ranch, the Abiquiu house was a thoroughly modern house with 20th-century conveniences. It had clean, running water; a conventional heating system; and cooperative-service electricity; and a laundry. It was nearly twice the size of the Ghost Ranch House, and

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152 Chabot, interview with Barbara Buhler Lynes, June 8, 1991, Tape 3, Side 1, 12.
153 Lynes and Paden, Maria Chabot — Georgia O’Keeffe, 327.
154 Lynes and Lopez, Georgia O’Keeffe and Her Houses, 112.
155 Ibid.
156 Ibid.
157 The Abiquiu House is a designated National Historic Landmark, and is treated in this nomination, as a resource covering a different period of significance in O’Keeffe’s career; see Sarah L. Burt and Carolyn Pitts. “O’Keeffe, Georgia, Home and Studio.” National Historic Landmarks nomination. January 20, 1998.
158 Cowart and Hamilton, Georgia O’Keeffe, 249.
had a floor plan designed specifically for O’Keeffe. Instead of shoehorning a studio into a living room, as had happened at Ghost Ranch, Chabot designed a large, light-filled painting room separated from the living quarters. It included a small office space where O’Keeffe conducted business. Of great importance to the painter, the property had a designed garden and land that could support a vegetable garden. Where Ghost Ranch was isolated, approached by an unmarked and poorly maintained road, the new house was in the middle of Abiquiu with neighbors and a store nearby. It became the place where O’Keeffe entertained friends, visitors, workers and children of workers.

Ghost Ranch, the place “up there,” was used as a seasonal retreat, as it always had been. It was a place that O’Keeffe could not give up, a place to get away, and a place of extraordinary beauty.

O’Keeffe’s painting also changed with her move to Abiquiu. The house, with its quiet spaces, encouraged a new group of images of her patio. The Patio series, as described by biographer Roxana Robinson, were of a “silent, ancient, sun-stripped dooryard [that] prohibit the very notion of movement. Soundless, immutable, and absolute, they emanate a sense of calm, but no emotion.”

O’Keeffe in the 1950s

By the early 1950s, O’Keeffe had firmly settled into her renovated hacienda, which she called the Abiquiu House. The decade started inauspiciously with a review of her work at An American Place, the first show of O’Keeffe’s art at the gallery since Stieglitz’s death. Titled “Georgia O’Keeffe: Paintings 1946-1950,” the show received little attention, as the art world had moved on, turning to Abstract Expressionism. O’Keeffe, for her part, used the decade of the 1950s to travel, leaving the United States for the first time in her life, beginning with an extended trip to Europe in 1953, followed by explorations of Peru, Asia, and the South Pacific.

While away, O’Keeffe let her family and friends stay at Ghost Ranch. Visiting in 1951, Anita Pollitzer described the Ghost Ranch studio as a “spacious storeroom for pictures,” and indicated that visitors were not allowed into it. If around, O’Keeffe would rouse her guests at dawn to view Cerro Pedernal. The most significant change of the decade occurred when in 1956 Arthur Pack, looking to pull out of New Mexico, donated the adjacent dude ranch to the Presbyterian Church for a conference center. Initially incensed, O’Keeffe put up no trespassing signs and constructed a new driveway to preserve her privacy.

Only a few paintings were made at Ghost Ranch during this period. These include Dry Waterfall (1951), a muted, vertically oriented canvas of the cliffs behind the house, and Lavender Hill with Green (1952), an oil painting of the badlands which O’Keeffe rendered

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159 Robison, Georgia O’Keeffe, 481.
160 Robinson, Georgia O’Keeffe, 481; Drohojowska-Philp, Full Bloom, 444.
162 Drohojowska-Philp, Full Bloom, 458-59.
in a lighter, almost pastel approach. The few other paintings encompass several takes of Cerro Pedernal—finishing that series in 1956. In a surprising work created near the end of the decade, O’Keeffe captured the simple wood ladder that had been leaning against the portal for years. Titled *Ladder to the Moon* (1958), the oil painting shows a wood ladder floating across a blue-green night sky, with a half-moon above and below the black silhouette of Cerro Pedernal.

**Creating the Breakfast Nook**

The next decade started much like the previous, with extended travel and conferred honors. In 1964, nearly two decades after the last major work at Ghost Ranch, O’Keeffe commissioned her former protégé, Maria Chabot, to reconstruct the kitchen. Chabot, who was living in Albuquerque, had been briefly married to a Rhodes Scholar and polar explorer before divorcing after six months. Starting in early August, Chabot worked nearly a month (109 hours) to supervise a project to remodel the kitchen and create the breakfast nook, which she called the “glassed room.”163 The design resembled the work that Chabot had likely managed twenty years earlier when large plate-glass panels were inserted in O’Keeffe’s bedroom to create corner windows. Similar to earlier projects, Chabot seems to have run afoul of her employer. In an August 24, 1964, invoice to O’Keeffe, Chabot wrote: “There is no question in my mind that — after the first week of the work — you wished to oversee the work at the ranch yourself. When this became clear to me, I withdrew.”164

Chabot determined that she should be paid $5.00 an hour, a number she had worked out with someone at the state employment bureau, noting in the letter that it was less than what a plumber made in Española. Chabot concluded the billing notice by writing, “I think in the long run you will enjoy the view of the glass room at the ranch. If I did not believe in that — I could not believe in anything,” finishing the letter formally with her full name.165

**Sky Above Clouds IV**

In 1965 the artist executed her last major painting at the Ghost Ranch House. The artist, starting with her first commercial air flight in 1941, became enchanted with the view of the world as seen through an airplane window. During that first flight, O’Keeffe wrote a letter to Chabot describing the sensation: “It is breathtaking as one rises up and over the world one has been living in . . . and looks down at it stretching away. . . . The world all simplified and beautiful and clear cut in pattern like time and history…”166 O’Keeffe’s round-the-world trips of the 1950s and 1960s gave the artist much more exposure to the sensation. Writing to her sister,

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163 Maria Chabot, letter to Georgia O’Keeffe, August 24, 1964, 2, Folder, Ghost Ranch: Legal & Financial Records (1964, undated), Unprocessed Maria Chabot Archive Collection Accrual, Georgia O’Keeffe Museum Curatorial Department Research Materials, Georgia O’Keeffe Museum, Santa Fe, New Mexico.

164 Ibid.

165 Ibid., 3.

166 Lynes and Paden, *Maria Chabot—Georgia O’Keeffe*, 12.
Claudia O’Keeffe, on a flight in 1960, she wrote: “Now the sun is bright over what looks like a vast field of snow stretching all the way to the horizon. . . . It is odd to look out on this field of snow or white cotton — It looks almost solid enough to walk on.”

This sensation stayed with O’Keeffe and inspired her last thematic set of paintings, the “Sky Above Clouds” series, started at the Abiquiu House in 1963. The series began with great enthusiasm. O’Keeffe, at age 78, found herself re-energized with the project. Assisted by Jean Seth, the daughter of a friend, O’Keeffe stretched long, horizontal canvases across her painting tables. The paintings started with the 3-foot by four-foot format, but soon expanded to larger sizes. The bigger canvases were split into two registers, with the clouds filling the lower portion and above the distant atmosphere. The first in the series were minimalistic in their depiction of the sky. Starting with Sky Above Clouds II (1963), the clouds became more animated, bobbing like icecaps toward a pink horizon. As the series continued, O’Keeffe painted the closer together, moving from puffy pillows to objects that looked closer white bricks.

The largest of the run and the largest painting made by O’Keeffe during her career, Sky Above Clouds IV (1965) required an improvised studio. With no suitably-sized space at Abiquiu, O’Keeffe returned to Ghost Ranch, using the old garage for a workroom. With help from assistants, the artist stretched the 8-foot by 24-foot canvas across the east wall, using a ladder to paint its uppermost parts. To bring better light to the space, O’Keeffe installed a new retractable garage door. O’Keeffe labored on the monumental painting over the summer. In a September letter to the Smithsonian, she apologized for not having responded to two earlier letters:

I do not pretend to think that excuses excuse — but I worked very hard this summer and wrote to no one — saw almost no one — It was a bit funny — I painted a painting 8 ft. and 24 feet wide — It kept me working every minute from 6 A. M. till 8-9 as it had to be finished before it got cold. . . . Such a size is of course ridiculous but I had it in my mind as something I wanted to do for a couple of years so I finally got at it and had a fine time —

Ralph Looney, an editor for the Albuquerque Tribune, dropped by the makeshift studio to photograph the completed work before it was shipped to Fort Worth as the newest painting of a 94-piece retrospective at the Amon Carter Museum of Western Art. Shot at floor level, the photograph captures the diminutive-looking artist, appearing a little exhausted, dressed in a dark

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167 Quote appears in Robison, Georgia O’Keeffe, 499.
168 Peter H. Hassrick, Georgia O’Keeffe Museum (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1997), 44.
169 Lynes and Lopez, Georgia O’Keeffe and Her Houses, 38.
170 Georgia O’Keeffe, letter to Adelyn Dohme Breeksin, November 26, 1965, quoted in Cowart and Hamilton, Georgia O’Keeffe, 268-69.
O’Keeffe, Georgia, Ghost Ranch House

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O’Keeffe, Georgia, Ghost Ranch House

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skirt and holding a pair of gloves. Behind her, the massive painting stretches beyond the border of the photograph.

In correspondence, while still apologizing for its size, O’Keeffe beamed over the painting. It briefly put her back in the vanguard with its abstract monumentality. It became the sensation of her retrospective at the Whitney Museum of American Art in 1970. Because of its large size, it was displayed in the ground-floor lobby. Journalist and art critic Hunter Drohojowska-Philp considers the painting a significant piece, synthesizing O’Keeffe’s “interest in Japanese woodblock prints, the cloud photographs taken by Stieglitz, and the monumental abstract painting of the 1960s.”

The career-culminating painting now hangs in the stairwell of Gallery 249 in the Art Institute of Chicago.

O’Keeffe retreats to Ghost Ranch

After this last productive period at the Ghost Ranch House, O’Keeffe became increasingly hindered by failing eyesight, forcing her to stop painting except with assistance. The artist began to rely more heavily on a cadre of companions and helpers. Her companions would drive her nearly every day from the Abiquiu House to Ghost Ranch for morning and evening walks. O’Keeffe, with her walking stick and chows, would head for her beloved cliffs, sometimes reaching them, other times turning around. O’Keeffe continued to stay at Ghost Ranch during the summers until 1982. In summer 1983 she made day trips with Juan Hamilton. The Ghost Ranch House was her favorite place to relax and contemplate. Here, she produced some of her later clay work and painted a series of rocks on stumps in the 1970s.

Agapita Judy Lopez, an Abiquiu native who started working for O’Keeffe in 1974, recalled that the artist kept returning to Ghost Ranch because it “had the privacy she didn’t have at Abiquiu.” Walks around the neighborhood of her Abiquiu House were frequently interrupted by neighbors or strangers trying to get a glimpse of the famous artist. Visitors to Ghost Ranch at this time were rare because of its isolated location.

At Ghost Ranch, O’Keeffe would eat dinner by herself in the breakfast nook, or on the patio with a companion. On the patio, her companions would read to her articles from popular magazines of the day: Time, National Geographic, Preservation magazine. O’Keeffe relayed her dreams and constantly talked about future projects. By this time, she didn’t need to maintain the rigid schedule of her more prolific years, and instead arranged her days with “whatever inspired her.” As her health began to fail in 1984, she moved to Santa Fe.

172 Caption, Drohojowska-Philp, Full Bloom, 375.
173 Lopez, conversation with John W. Murphey; Margaret Wood, Remembering Miss O’Keeffe: Stories from Abiquiu (Santa Fe: Museum of New Mexico Press, 2012), 53.
175 Lopez, conversation with John W. Murphey.
176 Wood, Remembering Miss O’Keeffe, 54.
177 Lopez, conversation with John W. Murphey.
Georgia O’Keeffe’s died on March 6, 1986 at age 98 in Santa Fe. The Ghost Ranch House and its contents were transferred to Juan Hamilton. Hamilton was a ceramicist that O’Keeffe had met in 1973. She had made him a studio assistant and, later, her manager. Hamilton lived in the house for a time, updating parts of the interior to his tastes and the design trends of the period. In the 1990s, for example, Hamilton repainted O’Keeffe’s stark white studio. In 1998, Hamilton negotiated the sale of the house, its contents, and surrounding land to the Burnett Foundation, an arts-and-culture foundation in Fort Worth, Texas, overseen by Anne Windfohr Marion and her husband, John L. Marion. A year earlier the couple had founded the Georgia O’Keeffe Museum and Study Center. Located in Santa Fe, the museum represented the first major collection of O’Keeffe’s work.

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), which owned the 21,000 acres surrounding the house soon filed an injunction to exercise their first right of refusal. After weeks of negotiation, the Burnett Foundation paid $350,000 to the church for their first option right, and $3 million to Juan Hamilton for the house and property.

The following year Anne Marion initiated an ambitious project to restore the adobe house, which had begun to deteriorate. The Santa Fe general-contracting firm Tent Rock, Inc. worked on the project for nearly two years. The work involved both repair and restoration to return the house to its appearance during O’Keeffe’s period of ownership.

Poor drainage, including much of the north wall, had deteriorated the adobe behind the stucco. To remediate the problem, an underground drain was installed, and the wall was reconstructed with new adobes and a concrete foundation below. Decayed windows were repaired or replaced in-kind to replicate the original design. The Burnett Foundation transferred ownership of the house and property to the Georgia O’Keeffe Museum in 2005. Since then, the museum has continued to restore the house, which it uses only for visiting scholars and special events. The museum plans restore the house and studio for public tours.

179 Ibid., September 10, 1998, B-1.
180 Muller, conversation with John W. Murphey.
181 Ibid.
9. Major Bibliographical References

**Bibliography** (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)


Chabot, Maria. “Unprocessed Maria Chabot Archive Collection Accrual.” Georgia O’Keeffe Museum Curatorial Department Research Materials, Georgia O’Keeffe Museum, Santa Fe, New Mexico.

_______. Interview with Barbara Buhler Lynes, June 8, 1991, Ghost Ranch, Transcript. Georgia O’Keeffe Museum Curatorial Department Research Materials, Georgia O’Keeffe Museum, Santa Fe, New Mexico.


Lopez, Agapita Judy. Conversation with John W. Murphey, July 8, 2019, Ghost Ranch, Abiquiu, New Mexico.


Plotek, Ariel. Interview with Steven Moffson, Santa Fe, New Mexico, March 10, 2020.


O’Keeffe, Georgia, Ghost Ranch House

Rio Arriba, New Mexico

Name of Property                   County and State


Previous documentation on file (NPS):

___ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
___ previously listed in the National Register
___ previously determined eligible by the National Register
___ designated a National Historic Landmark
___ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # __________
___ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # __________
___ recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # __________

Primary location of additional data:

___ State Historic Preservation Office
___ Other State agency
___ Federal agency
___ Local government
___ University
___ Other
___ Name of repository: Research and Collections Services, Georgia O’Keeffe Museum, Santa Fe, New Mexico

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): N/A

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10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property: Approximately 8 acres

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates (decimal degrees)
Datum if other than WGS84:
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1. Latitude: 36.334112   Longitude: -106.494748

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)
The National Register boundary appears on the sketch map as a red line drawn to scale and corresponding with the point of latitude and longitude in Section 10.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)
The selected boundary includes the property historically associated with the period that Georgia O’Keeffe occupied the house.

11. Form Prepared By

Name/Title: John W. Murphey
Organization: Architectural History Services
Street & number: 440 Jackson Drive
City or town: Santa Rosa   State: CA   Zip code: 95409
E-mail: John@archhistoryservices.com
Telephone: 505-577-7593
Date: September 27, 2019

State Historic Preservation Office
Name/title: Steven Moffson, State and National Register Coordinator
Organization: New Mexico Historic Preservation Division
Street & number: 407 Galisteo Street, Suite 236
City or town: Santa Fe   State: New Mexico   Zip: 87501
Telephone: 505.476.0444
Date: January 21, 2020
Additional Documentation
Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A USGS map or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.

- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

**Photographs**
Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn’t need to be labeled on every photograph.

**Figures**

Figure 1. *Construction of Arthur Pack House*, 1933, Courtesy Peggy McKinley

Figure 2. *Construction of Arthur Pack House*, 1933, Courtesy Peggy McKinley

Figure 3. Georgia O’Keeffe, *The House I live In*, 1937,
Yale University Art Museum, CR 913

Figure 4. Georgia O’Keeffe, *Red and yellow Cliffs Ghost Ranch*, 1940,
©The Metropolitan Museum of Art, CR 997

Figure 5. Ansel Adams, *Georgia O'Keeffe holding bones*, 1937, Georgia O'Keeffe Museum, gift of The Georgia O'Keeffe Foundation
©Ansel Adams Publishing Rights Trust [2006.6.855]

Figure 6. John Cadelario, *Georgia O'Keeffe and Maria Chabot on Ghost Ranch House Patio*, 1942, Palace of the Governors Photo Archives (NMHM/DCA), 165668

Figure 7. Maria Chabot, *Georgia O'Keeffe Climbing Ladder, Ghost Ranch House Patio*, 1944, Maria Chabot Archive, Georgia O'Keeffe Museum, gift of Maria Chabot
©Georgia O'Keeffe Museum
Figure 8. Philippe Halsman, *Georgia O'Keeffe, Ghost Ranch*, 1949, Georgia O'Keeffe Museum, gift of The Georgia O'Keeffe Foundation ©Halsman Estate [2006.6.827]

Figure 9. Todd Webb, *Georgia O’Keeffe on Ghost Ranch Portal*, undated, ©Todd Webb, Georgia O'Keeffe Museum

Figure 10. *Ghost Ranch Living Room* (as used by the Packs), 1933, Later used by O’Keeffe as her studio. Peggy McKinley

Figure 11. Todd Webb, *Georgia O’Keeffe Studio, Ghost Ranch*, 1965, ©Todd Webb, Evans Gallery and Estate of Todd and Lucille Webb

Figure 12. Cecil Beaton, *Georgia O’Keeffe’s Ghost Ranch Studio*, 1967, Beaton/Vogue/Condé Nast Archive, ©Condé Nast

Figure 13. Ralph Looney, *Georgia O’Keeffe with Sky Above Clouds IV*, 1965, The Albuquerque Museum of Art and History, Gift of the Estate of Ralph and Clarabelle Looney

Figure 14. Dan Budnick, *Ghost Ranch patio* Portal, 1975, ©Dan Budnik

**Photo Log**

**Name of Property:** O’Keeffe, Georgia, Ghost Ranch House

**City or Vicinity:** Abiquiu vicinity

**County:** Rio Arriba  **State:** New Mexico

**Photographer:**  
Krysta Jabczenski (September 2019): 1-5  
John W. Murphey (July 2019): 6-8, 11, 18-21  
Rana Chan (July 2019): 9-10, 12-17  
©Georgia O’Keeffe Museum

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

1 of 21. Main house and cliffs, photographer facing north.

2 of 21. Main house with open patio, photographer facing north.


4 of 21. North elevation with Cerro Pedernal, photographer facing south.
O’Keeffe, Georgia, Ghost Ranch House       Rio Arriba, New Mexico
Name of Property                             County and State

5 of 21. North elevation with Cerro Pedernal, photographer facing south.


7 of 21. West side, photographer facing east.

8 of 21. Interior, south bedroom, photographer facing southeast.


16 of 21. Interior, Georgia O’Keeffe bedroom, photographer facing northeast.


20 of 21. Interior, tack room/shed, photographer facing northwest.

21 of 21. Interior, corral, photographer facing west.
O'Keeffe, Georgia, Ghost Ranch House
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Rio Arriba, New Mexico
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Georgia O'Keeffe Ghost Ranch House
Rio Arriba County, New Mexico
Location Map
National Register Boundary □
O’Keeffe, Georgia, Ghost Ranch House
Rio Arriba County, New Mexico

Sketch Map

National Register Boundary
O’Keeffe, Georgia, Ghost Ranch House
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Georgia O’Keeffe Ghost Ranch House
Rio Arriba County, New Mexico
Sketch Map
National Register Boundary
Approximate scale: one inch = 125 feet
Georgia O’Keeffe Ghost Ranch House
Rio Arriba County, New Mexico
Floor Plan as it appeared in 1933
Beverly Spears
©Georgia O’Keeffe Museum
Georgia O’Keeffe Ghost Ranch House
Rio Arriba County, New Mexico
Floor Plan as it appeared in 2001
Joel Muller, modified by S. Moffson
©Georgia O’Keeffe Museum
Georgia O’Keeffe Ghost Ranch House
Rio Arriba County, New Mexico
Photo Key of Interior
Joel Muller, modified by S. Moffson
©Georgia O’Keeffe Museum

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service / National Register of Historic Places Registration Form
NPS Form 10-900 OMB No. 1024-0018
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