

Unfinished and maybe not right - do tell

4.) Pop Shaffer's Hotel and Rancho Bonito

Tiny Mountainair, New Mexico, once knew a time when 12,000 people a year flocked to that city solely for the purpose of staying at the Hotel Shaffer and visiting Rancho Bonito. There are no such crowds now, fifty years later, but the Hotel and Ranch remain as testimony to one man's all-encompassing creative vision.

Pop Shaffer was not only a capable businessman in the operation of his hotel; he was the hotel's architect, designer, decorator, builder, craftsman, and resident artist. His unique and vivid building style and decor, based on the New Mexican environment, are remarkable in themselves--but what set Pop Shaffer apart from those professionals who train for the jobs Pop did from instinct was his creation of hundreds of carved creatures or animals ornamenting the buildings and populating the hotel "zoo".

He would discover the shape of a creature in a root or limb, then carefully carve to bring out the figure which less-sensitive eyes would have missed. The final effect of Pop's years of carving, decoration and placement was to create a fantasy world which preceded (and far surpassed) the mechanical fantasies since cultivated by American "theme" parks or corporate-sponsored recreation areas.

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