

1923 THE HOTEL

As "Pop" explained it:

"In 1922 my place (the blacksmith shop) burned down so in 1923 I started to build a new concrete building for a hardware store and implement house. I got the first story up and the traveling men got after me to put a second story on top of the concrete and put a hotel up there. My wife heard them talking to me about it and she wanted me to do that. She said 'I'll run it,' so she is still running it."

1931 THE FENCE

"Pop's" words:

"In 1931, I built a fence west of the hotel in front of our cottage which later burned down. This fence is a very unusual piece of work."

1932 THE DINING ROOM

Again "Pop" referred to this simply as:

"An unusual piece of work."

SHAFFER COMPANY

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The Restored Historic Shaffer Hotel

In
Mountainair,
New Mexico



"What the forces were that motivated 'Pop Shaffer' to begin work on his small animals and decorated buildings are not known nor do we know what guided the creation of such a unified vision. We do know that there are no other examples of Folk Environments on this scale in New Mexico..."

—from the nomination document of the Shaffer Hotel for the National Register of Historic Places.

National Park Service Visitor Center

(Administration offices
of Salinas National Park)

Clem "Pop" Shaffer was born in Harmony, Indiana on July 20, 1880 and was the 13th child. His father was a blacksmith, a common and very necessary occupation of the time, and he passed this on to his son. "Pop" was a blacksmith, but he was also many other things: a merchant, a horsetrader, a land speculator, a philanthropist, a patriot... The list goes on and on, but most of all he was a dreamer and an artist. Fortunately, "Pop" was one whose main efforts were devoted toward making his dreams come true. He selected Mountainair, New Mexico in the early 1900s, as the place to achieve these dreams.

Mountainair at that time was a thriving community known as "The Pinto Bean Capital of the World," a beehive of activity and enterprise. It was the ideal setting for his efforts to culminate into reality.

THIS HOTEL AND RANCHO BONITO, ONE MILE SOUTH ON HWY 14, ARE THE PRODUCTS OF THESE EFFORTS.

Least we forget, "Pop" was not alone, his partner and wife, affectionately referred to as "Ma," deserves a great deal more credit than has been given her. Lena Imboden Shaffer, "Pop's" second wife, was undoubtedly the mainstay of this combo, the one who made it all work. All too often credit has neglected the man, or woman as in this case, behind the scene. Lena, "Pop," and the children, two of which were from his first marriage, lived on a homestead south of Mountainair. When "Pop" wrote his memoirs, he said that Lena was the most wonderful stepmother that ever was. Jackie Hudgeons, a granddaughter said, "She must have been a saint. She was awfully tolerant of Grandpa."

The Shaffer Hotel is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and in the nomination document this description is found:

"Like other artists The Folk Art Environmentalist seems to be driven by the need for expression, but in this case the expression often takes the form of a lifetime, single project which is guided by the desire to form an environment over which the artist has complete control. The unity of the artist's vision is readily apparent but the underlying motivation is much more difficult to discern. On the whole, works by American Folk Environmentalists seem to share no direct relationship with the art of the past or awareness of developments in the art of their contemporaries. They work outside the mainstream, intently focusing on an inner vision, the content, scope, and style of which is the sole product of the artist. What the forces were that motivated "Pop Shaffer" to begin work on his small animals and decorated buildings are not known nor do we know what guided the creation of such a unified vision. We do know that there are no other examples of Folk Environments on this scale in New Mexico and that efforts should be made to preserve this humorous and impressive monument to one man's vision."

