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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

State-of-the-Art New Mexico History Museum Opens May 2009

Santa Fe, New Mexico -- The brand new state-of-the-art *New Mexico History Museum* will open to the public in Santa Fe in May of 2009. When completed, the 96,000 square foot New Mexico History Museum will be established behind the Palace of the Governors, the oldest continually occupied government building in the United States. Incorporating and preserving the Palace of the Governors, and the Fray Angelico Chavez center, including the current state Photo Archives, the new Museum will form a new "campus" on the site.

The *New Mexico History Museum* will be a home for New Mexicans and for visitors to the state, dealing with vital issues of local and global importance. The new Museum will be a "must-see" destination for cultural tourism, as well as center for exploration of the state's own unique history.

(Statement by Stuart Ashman.)

The Museum will be participatory, involving visitors through audio-visual tours and interactive "stations." Exhibits will engage youngsters and special events will draw in the community. The present and future collections of the museum will at last have a permanent and up-to-date home, where the preservation of and access to artifacts and material arts will be a top priority. The new building will have storage facilities and climate-controlled vaults, an auditorium, an educational center, and 26,000 square feet of exhibition galleries.

The lure and mystique of New Mexico is simultaneously unique to the state, and part of our nation's larger attraction to stories of the American West. The *New Mexico History Museum* seeks to address that mystique, and those stories. It will lead visitors to a new comprehension and enjoyment of New Mexico's history within the broader context of the settlement of the American West.

Many Americans have been brought up to believe that the eastern colonies, especially the Pilgrim colony at Plymouth Rock, mark the beginnings of our nation's history. Nothing could be farther from the truth. New Mexico, and the Palace of the Governors itself, has a recorded history that goes back 400 years, predating the arrival to this country of the Massachusetts settlers.

The Museum will emphasize New Mexico's stories of the mingling of diverse cultures and indigenous peoples, brash explorers and brave settlers, soaring vistas and mountains rising up in every direction, the bright light of high elevations, the dense forests of the north, the muddy Rio Grande. The Museum will remind visitors that there is here a unique sense of place, and the understanding that we *are* our stories. Stories of the New Mexican past inevitably connect to the future, teaching visitors to learn valuable lessons from those who have gone before.

The *New Mexico History Museum* will feature state-of-the-art exhibits reaching back before the Spanish Exploration in the 1500s to stories of native peoples living on these lands for thousands of years, to the Spanish Colonial period when the inhabitants of this place were under Spanish control for 223 years. From the region's 25-year history as part of Mexico, to its transition to an American Territory for 66 years, and finally to statehood in 1912, the Museum will document New Mexico's unusually layered history.

Familiar histories, such as the Pueblo Revolt of 1680, the advent of the Santa Fe Trail, bringing trappers and traders, the wars of Manifest Destiny, and the arrival of the railroad will all be included in the Museum. Familiar people, from Billy the Kid to Cochise and Kit Carson, Georgia O'Keeffe to Robert Oppenheimer – all will be re-introduced through the Museum. And perhaps more importantly, the *New Mexico History Museum* will uncover the daily lives of not so well known inhabitants of this place. The stories of modern New Mexicans – whether cowboys, scientists, artists, Native craftsman, or politicians – will also have a new home in the Museum.

The world-class *New Mexico History Museum* is truly a place for all.

The opening of the new museum, which has been under design and construction for 10 years, will coincide with the 100th anniversary of the State museum system, now overseen by the State Department of Cultural Affairs.

For more information about the New Mexico History Museum, please visit www.nmhistorymuseum.org.