

Complete Overhaul

Joseph Henry Sharp's Taos studio gets a comprehensive renovation in anticipation of a variety of summer events.

Two of Western art's most famous artists not only helped co-found the Taos Society of Artists together, but their studios were also next door to each other on the same lot in Taos, New Mexico. Eanger Irving Couse, the Taos Society's first president, and Joseph Henry Sharp, who first visited Taos in 1893 and encouraged his fellow artists to visit, were two of most influential members of the six Taos founders. Their contributions to Western art form the foundation of the Couse-Sharp Historic Site, which is made up of Couse's home, gardens and studio and two of Sharp's studios, including his first, the Luna Chapel.

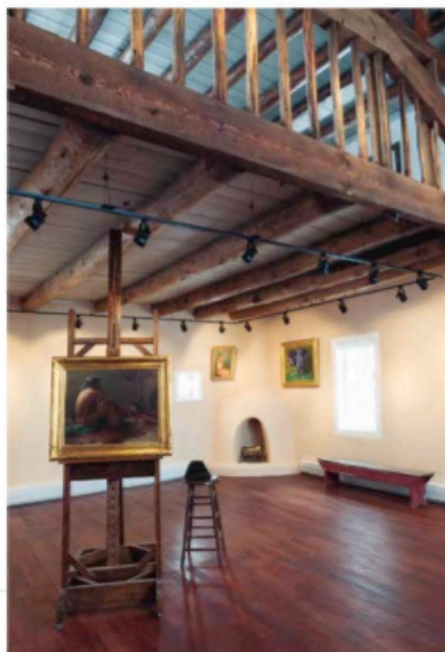
The Luna Chapel, built in 1835, has served as an art studio for generations of artists

since Sharp's death in 1953. It was recently renovated from top to bottom by the Couse Foundation, which oversees the historic site. "The renovation is complete now, but it was extensive," says Davison Packard Koenig, executive director and curator at the site. "Everything from new flooring, new lighting, environmental controls, new plumbing...we even replastered the walls, and when they work on the mud in there you can't see past your own arm. It was a major undertaking."

Koenig says the renovation also preserved two oddities in the original design: a second-floor doorway from a loft that leads to a drop-off on the side of the building; and a "round-square" window, round on the outside and square on the inside. The



An undated historic photo of the Luna Chapel. Courtesy of McCracken Research Library, Buffalo Bill Center of the West, Cody, WY.



The Luna Chapel in Taos.

Joseph Henry Sharp's *Old War Chief's Son* is on display in the recently renovated Luna Chapel, Sharp's first studio in Taos, New Mexico.



Joseph Henry Sharp inside his studio in Taos, New Mexico. Courtesy of McCracken Research Library, Buffalo Bill Center of the West, Cody, WY.



Joseph Henry Sharp at his easel in the Luna Chapel. Courtesy of McCracken Research Library, Buffalo Bill Center of the West, Cody, WY.

purpose of each of these curious designs has never been explained.

The renovation, funded in part by a generous donation from the Tia Collection, was finished for the Couse-Sharp Historic Site's busy summer, which includes an exhibition, lectures, a gala and

many other events. Events kick off June 9 with the exhibition *Joseph Henry Sharp: The Life and Work of an American Legend*, which will feature work by the famous Taos artist, including some work likely painted in the Luna Chapel more than a century ago. The

exhibition will be followed on June 10 by a lecture on Sharp at the nearby Harwood Museum of Art, and then the *Fifth Biennial Gala Art Auction and Fundraiser* at the El Monte Sagrado Resort. Additional events include the exhibition *Seldom Seen: Archival Stories* on July 1, and also various open house events scheduled for August, September and October. For a full schedule, visit www.couse-sharp.org.

Couse Foundation board member Laura Finlay Smith, curator of Santa Fe's Tia Collection, says the renovated Luna Chapel has come a long way from where it once was. "Because it has been art studio ever since Sharp, there was paint splatter on the floor and other places. It needed some TLC because it's a beautiful space. The light in there is spectacular. It would be an artist's dream,"

Smith says. "So what the studio received was really great. Sharp was not only one of the founders of the Taos Society of Artists, he was the one who got [Ernest] Blumenschein and [Bert Geer] Phillips and others to come see Taos. He was quite enamored with it."

Joseph Henry Sharp: The Life and Work of an American Legend will feature loaned pieces from the Tia Collection. "The Tia Collection is very much about sharing, about exposing works in the collection to a really broad audience. We work with 40 to 50 institutions around the world," Smith says. "We're loaning five really great Sharp originals for the show that is expected to have 20 to 25 works."

The newly renovated gallery will officially open along with the new exhibition on June 9. ¹⁸