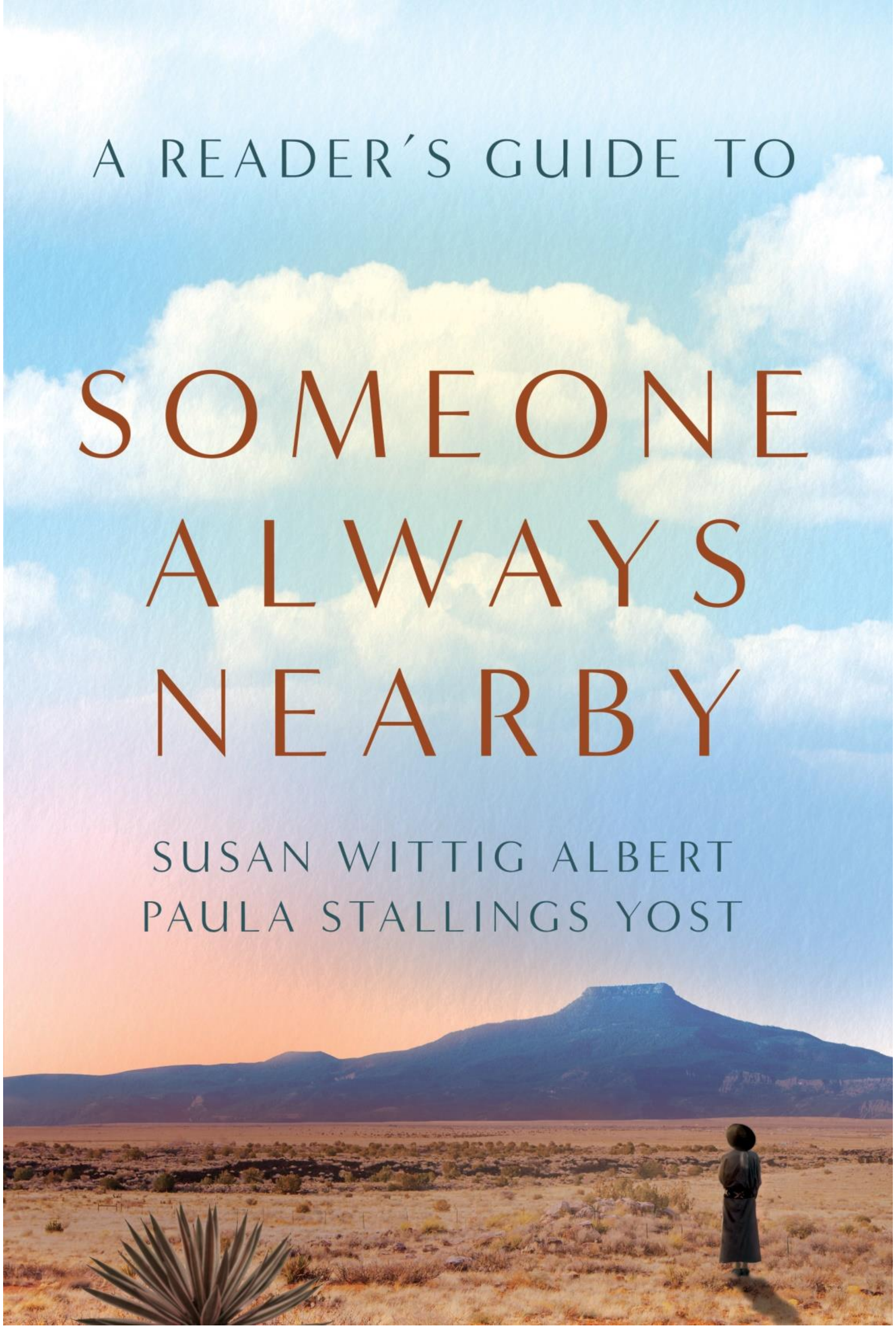

A READER´S GUIDE TO

SOMEONE ALWAYS NEARBY

SUSAN WITTIG ALBERT
PAULA STALLINGS YOST

A READER'S GUIDE
TO
SOMEONE ALWAYS NEARBY

BY SUSAN WITTIG ALBERT
AND PAULA STALLINGS YOST

Persevero Press

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A NOTE TO READERS OF THIS *GUIDE*

> What's your story? It's all in the telling. Stories are compasses and architecture; we navigate by them, we build our sanctuaries and our prisons out of them, and to be without a story is to be lost in the vastness of a world that spreads in all directions like arctic tundra or sea ice. To love someone is to put yourself in their place, we say, which is to put yourself in their story, or figure out how to tell yourself their story. Which means that a place is a story, and stories are geography, and empathy is first of all an act of imagination, a storyteller's art, and then a way of traveling from here to there.
>
> —Rebecca Solnit, *The Faraway Nearby*

FROM SUSAN ALBERT

Over the six or seven years I've been thinking about and researching *Someone Always Nearby*, I have considered a number of different ways to share with you what I learned about Maria Chabot, Georgia O'Keeffe, and the years they spent together, which Maria herself struggled to put into story. A biography of Maria, perhaps? Or a dual biography of both women? A series of essays? Academic papers to be delivered at feminist conferences? What?

But as Rebecca Solnit suggests, to know someone is to put yourself into her story. So I decided to cast myself as a novelist and Georgia's and Maria's story as fiction, set in the place they loved and peopled by the women and men they knew and sometimes loved. But because I am a researcher at heart and a literary historian by training, and because the story is rooted in real life and is to some extent controversial, I decided to offer this *Reader's Guide*—compiled and written with the help of Paula Yost—as an adjunct to the fiction. In it, you will find references to the research that is the foundation for Maria's and Georgia's stories. Paula and I have also included background material about the people and places and events of the story, so that you can better understand the economic, social, political, and geographic environments in which both women lived their lives.

As we have compiled this *Guide*, it's been difficult to know how *much* you would like to know, especially since we're not sure who you are. Are you a reader who has never heard of O'Keeffe? A casual reader who knows something about O'Keeffe but nothing about Chabot? Deeply interested in their letters and and perhaps doing your own research on either or both of them? We've decided to err on the side of "too much," on the theory that that some readers will want to know more and others will simply skip what doesn't interest them.

Whether you are a casual reader or an enthusiastic researcher, we hope this *Guide* will help you engage more deeply with the story of these two fascinating women, each compelled by her own desires, one serving the demands of her art, the other serving the demands of the artist. We also hope it will lead you into further reading and study so that you can form your own opinions about the complicated collaboration that enabled Georgia to do some of her very best artistic work and prompted Maria to devote years of her life to building a home and studio for her friend—the adobe house in Abiquiu, New Mexico, which you can visit today.

About sources. As you will see in the following pages, the primary source for the novel is the collection of 700-plus letters published as *Maria Chabot, Georgia O'Keeffe Correspondence, 1941-1949* (University of New Mexico Press, 2003), which I simplify as *Correspondence*. We have quoted from it (and from other letters) with permission and as the letters were written, with no corrections of spelling or punctuation.

In addition to the women's published letters, we have consulted many of the documents in the extensive collection of letters and papers held by the Georgia O'Keeffe Museum in Santa Fe, New Mexico. The library is a truly magical place to visit, staffed by able and dedicated archivists whose job it is to make these documents and many others accessible. While there is as yet no published biography of Maria Chabot, there are several biographies of Georgia O'Keeffe. We have relied heavily on them, as well as on published letters, interviews, exhibit catalogs, and online sources. You can see these in the Works Cited list at the back of this *Guide*.

FROM PAULA YOST

Let's start with an explanation of the format. Since so many of the resources we used are found on the internet, we decided to publish this *Guide* as an ebook and not in print. This allows us to make the links live, so that all you have to do is click on them. We will address updates and broken links on the book's website,

When Susan and I read a historical novel that includes real people, we're always curious: are the details real or made up? Where did the author get her information? Where can we find out more? Other readers ask these questions, too, so we know we're not alone. But we're not the only kind of readers, so we've written this *Guide* for a variety of people:

- casual readers who may look no further than the general comments in the beginning and the synopses and setting information for each chapter;

- book groups and group leaders who want to expand the discussion and may find the "For Your Consideration" sections helpful, as well as the book group questions published separately on the book's website; and
- readers who enjoy consulting footnotes and digging into the narrative's background and sources will want to check out "For Further Study." The bold/italic key phrases in those sections of the *Guide* correspond to the same phrases in the text of Someone. For example, ***She wasn't finished*** (the first key phrase in Chapter One of the *Guide*) is keyed to the paragraph in Chapter 1 of *Someone* that begins, "She wasn't finished." This section contains authorial commentary (and often, author opinions), as well as additional resources for readers who want to extend their research.

The text in the *Guide* offers additional background as well as published and unpublished resources in print and online, which you will find fully documented in the Works Cited list at the back of the book.

You will also find a character list, a timeline of important events, and a list of discussion questions there. We hope you will use this material to continue to explore the lives of Georgia O'Keeffe and Maria Chabot and the amazing landscape where they made their homes.

FROM SUSAN AGAIN

My caution in the author's note at the beginning *of Someone Always Nearby* bears repeating here, because it's important. Writing about real people is tricky—and so is reading about them. As you read *Someone Always Nearby,* you will encounter a great many factual details about the people, the places, and the historical setting. Indeed, it may all seem so real that you may be tempted to take my fiction as fact, "the true story" of "what really happened."

But please don't be deceived. None of my reliance on factual material alters the basic truth: I made the story up. Yes, I have tried to respect the real people and see them as they were. And yes, I have stayed as close to the real events as I could. But the narrative itself, although borrowed from reality, was imagined into fiction as the story began to tell itself to me out of the amazing welter of facts and reported stories and other people's opinions that I found in my research. It's all made up, folks. It's a *story.* Please remember that.

And here's something else about the nature of story that's helpful to remember, said best by Rebecca Solnit, writing in *The Faraway Nearby*:

> We think we tell stories, but stories often tell us, tell us to love or to hate, to see or to be blind. Often, too often, stories saddle us, ride us, whip us onward, tell us what to do, and we do it without questioning.

> The task of learning to be free requires learning to hear them, to question them, to pause and hear silence, to name them, and then to become the storyteller.

Maria Chabot had her own story about what happened in her life. Georgia O'Keeffe did, too. Sometimes they blindly imposed those stories on one another, sometimes they learned to hear and question those stories—to *re-story* them in important ways. And sometimes those changed stories changed *them.*

As you read *Someone* and use this *Guide* to take you into more and deeper explorations of the lives of Georgia O'Keeffe and Maria Chabot, we hope that you, too, will become their storyteller.

Susan Wittig Albert
Paula Stallings Yost
November, 2023

OVERVIEW OF SOMEONE ALWAYS NEARBY

Whether you're reading *Someone Always Nearby* for yourself or for a book group, you may find yourself thinking or talking about its literary elements. So before we turn to the individual chapters, let's start with a quick review of a few familiar terms.

THE STRUCTURE

The novel is organized into four major sections, arranged chronologically.

- Part One (Chapters 1-4, with interchapters "The Piedra Lumbre" and "Ghost Ranch") is called "Always Nearby." It takes place at Ghost Ranch in 1941 and covers the first year of the women's friendship, as they settle into their summer and autumn months (June through November), with Maria serving as Georgia's "someone always nearby." As they find ways to live and work together, we learn something of their personal histories, their needs and desires, and their conflicts. The section ends with Pearl Harbor and the beginning of World War II. The chapters are narrated from three points of view: Maria's (Chapter 1 and Chapter 2, in first person), Georgia's (Chapter 3, third person), and the author-narrator's (the two interchapters).
- Part Two, "The Faraway" (Chapters 5-7, with interchapter "Los Luceros") takes place over the next three years (1942-1944) in New York, at Ghost Ranch, and at Los Luceros. We learn more about Maria and Georgia and their lives together and apart. But the months at Ghost Ranch aren't easy. The conflicts multiply until at last Maria knows that it's time for her to stop being "someone always nearby" and find her own direction. She is stunned when Mary Wheelwright, the owner of a large estate called Los Luceros, steps up to offer her an astonishing opportunity. Georgia's story is told in Chapter Five and Maria's in Chapters Six and Seven. You'll hear the author's voice in the interchapter, "Los Luceros."
- Part Three, "Going Away" (Chapters 8-12, with interchapter "Abiquiu") tells Maria's story as she settles into Los Luceros, plans and constructs Georgia's house at Abiquiu, and embarks on the rest of her life. (Chapters 8, 9, 11, and 12). It also tells Georgia's story after the

death of her husband. She wraps up obligations in New York and returns to New Mexico (Chapter 10 and 12). "Abiquiu" is in the author's voice.

- The After section is nonfiction, based on the biographies and on newspaper and magazine accounts of the years 1973 through 2001. In it, we learn the rest of Maria's story and what happens when a new "someone always nearby" comes into Georgia's life.

THE CHARACTERS

The characters in this novel are as fictional as those in every other novel—in *Alice in Wonderland,* for instance. But unlike Alice and the Queen of Hearts and the White Rabbit, Maria, Georgia, Mary Wheelwright, and others are based on the real Georgia O'Keeffe, Maria Chabot, Mary Wheelwright, and others, as they present themselves in their letters and other writings and are depicted by people who knew or have studied them. Fictional dialogue and interior thought is largely based on letters and other writings (published and unpublished) and on published interviews, recordings, and film.

You'll find a complete list of characters at the back of this book, along with a timeline of events in the real lives of Georgia O'Keeffe and Maria Chabot.

THE SETTINGS: PLACE

This is a story about people *and* place, and about the many wonderful ways in which the landscape shapes people's lives, creates their horizons, and inspires their passions. New York is home to Georgia's cosmopolitan life at the epicenter of the American art world. The New Mexico settings are a vivid contrast: the Piedra Lumbre, a mountain-rimmed desert region; Ghost Ranch, a remote dude ranch, now a renowned conference center; Los Luceros, one of New Mexico's most scenic and culturally significant ranches; and the historically important village of Abiquiu, home to O'Keeffe's studio and residence. Indeed, every setting in this book has its own uniquely significant history, which often intrudes into the lives of the people who live there. And of course it was the desert, mountains, and sky that lured O'Keeffe to New Mexico and brought her back, year after year, until she finally came to stay.

You'll find a map of the entire region at the end of this section and links throughout to additional online descriptions of place. Please use them to broaden your understanding of the beauty, history, and cultural significance of this unique world.

THE SETTINGS: TIME

This historical novel spans the years of World War II, the post-war period, and the 1950s through the 1980s. The challenges of life on the Home Front define many of the options and choices that confront Maria and Georgia during the war years. The expansionist decades of the 1950s through the 1980s brought Georgia more fame and certainly more fortune. The Vietnam War and the growth of the art market is the background of the early years of the later chapters. The timeline at the back of the book may help to give you a sense of the span of the characters' lives: from 1887 (Georgia's birth) to 2001 (Maria's death).

POINTS OF VIEW

Maria's story (Chapters 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 11, 12) is told in her first-person voice, as both a participant in and an observer of life at the ranch and, later, in Abiquiu, Los Luceros, and New York. Maria has definite opinions about people (especially Georgia) and events and isn't shy about voicing them. Events change her dramatically as she encounters them. Georgia's story, on the other hand (Chapters 3, 7, and 10), is told in a limited third-person point of view that reflects something of her controlled emotional life in the years covered by this novel.

The "After" chapter is told from a third-person, authorial point of view that reflects access to the many published reports of what happened, both in book form and in contemporary newspapers and magazines.

THEMES

Someone Always Nearby is based on the letters exchanged by Maria and Georgia, and their dynamic, shifting friendship is a dominant theme. Maria's friendships (Mary Wheelwright, Dorothy Stewart, Beck James) broaden that theme for her, as the characters ask themselves and others some important questions:

- What kind of emotional support should friends expect?
- Does connecting with a strong woman really make us stronger?
- What do we owe to our friends that we don't owe to others? What do we owe to those who help us and on whom we depend for support and comfort?
- How do our needs and dependencies shape our friendships?

As a painter, Georgia's life was centered around her work, and the practice of mid-century American art is another major theme. Her relationship with impresario and gallery owner Alfred Stieglitz prompts us to ask what kind of help emerging artists (especially women) need and where they get it (or don't). Stieglitz and O'Keeffe were a notable power couple of the 1930s and 1940s, raising questions about who manages art trends, who decides what art is truly artful and why, what role promotion and "buzz" play in shaping artists' reputations and their markets, and what shapes the relationship between the value and the price of art.

A third theme has to do with the role of landscape and place in a choice of lifestyle and a fourth with image and personal "brand" as a way of establishing a self in the minds of others. A fifth involves the troubling relationship between art and money. As you read, you may find other themes emerging—some that the author herself might not be aware of. Good for you! That's the role of a creative reader.

RESOURCES

As you can see from the lists of "Works Cited" at the back of this *Guide,* the fiction has been created from quite a number of sources. Of these, four appear most frequently. These may be available from your library or through interlibrary loan; all four can be found online at the Internet Archive. (It's easy to open an account and, as of this writing, free.) Here they are, in alphabetical order:

Full Bloom: The Art and Life of Georgia O'Keeffe, by Hunter Drohojowska-Philp. W. W. Norton, Kindle Edition, 2004.

Georgia O'Keeffe: A Life, by Roxana Robinson. Expanded edition, Brandeis University Press, Kindle Edition, 2020.

Maria Chabot—Georgia O'Keeffe Correspondence, 1941–1949, Edited by Barbara Buhler Lynes and Ann Paden. University of New Mexico Press, 2003.

O'Keeffe: The Life of an American Legend, by Jeffrey Hogrefe. Bantam Books, 1992 (page numbers refer to the hardcover edition).

AUTHOR'S INTENTION (FROM SUSAN ALBERT)

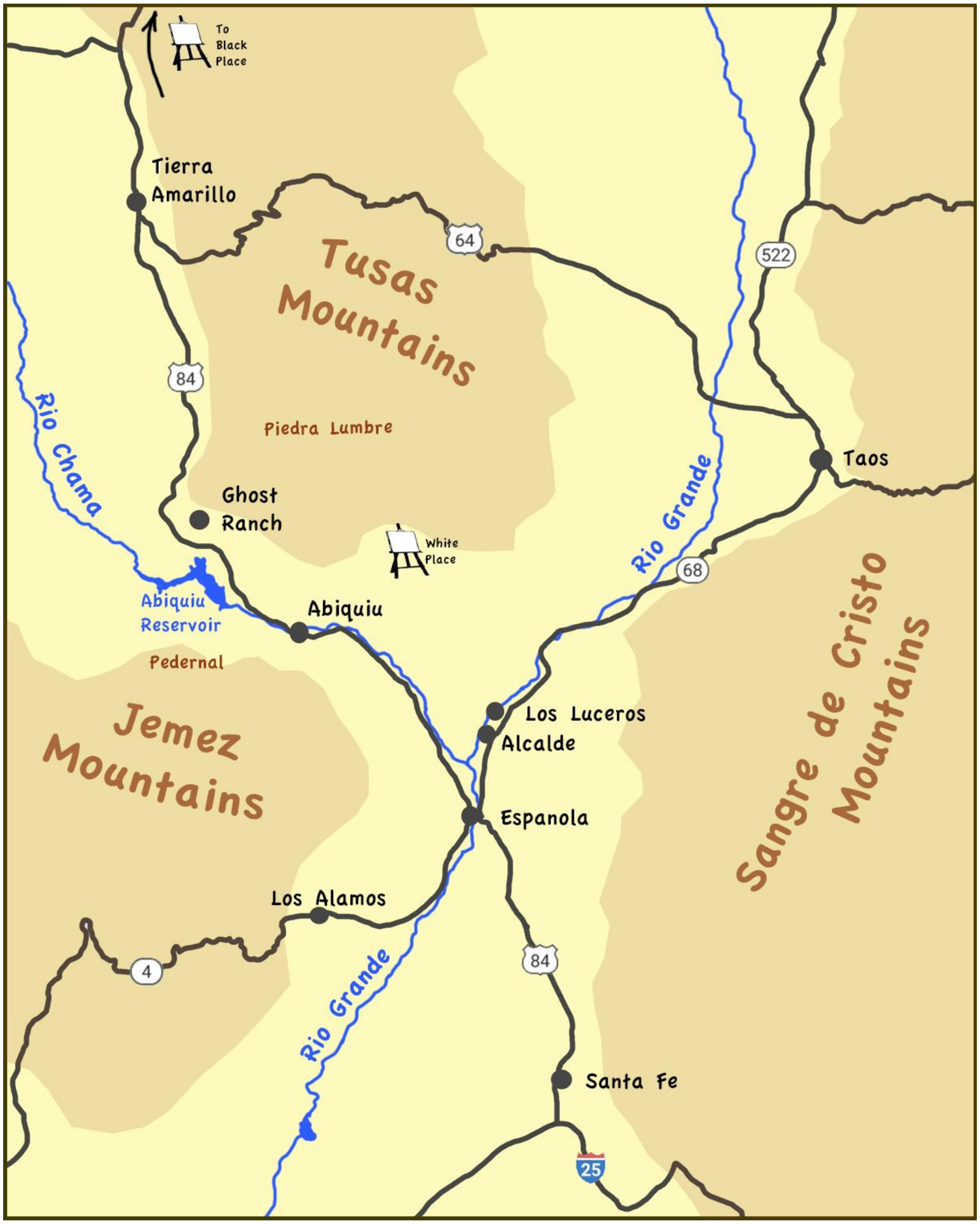
Sometimes authors write for love, sometimes for money, sometimes to tell a powerful story or further an important agenda or create a place for themselves in the literary galaxy. Or sometimes just because. When I was studying literature in college, my professors told me that authors' intentions were irrelevant to my understanding of their work. I didn't agree with them then, and I still don't. While authorial intentions are often complicated and sometimes even contradictory, I know that the *why* of a work can be as important as the *who* and the *when* and the *how.*

So I'm thinking it might be helpful to you to know that I was prompted to write this book by the story the editors of the *Correspondence* imposed on Maria's and Georgia's letters, a story I felt was just plain wrong. They claim that Maria became such a difficult friend—jealously possessive, immaturely angry, even disruptive—that the patient and longsuffering Georgia was forced to evict her from the ranch and the Abiquiu house and forbid her to return. According to this narrative, the friendship, such as it was, ended in

1944. The editors' storyline (explicit in the introduction and in many notes throughout) made no sense to me on first reading, and it made even less sense as I dug deeper into the rich trove of materials by and about these two women.

Bottom line: I wrote *Someone Always Nearby* in order to discover for myself what kind of friend Maria Chabot was to Georgia O'Keeffe during the years they worked together, why O'Keeffe found it difficult to sustain that friendship and others, and how this difficulty led to the challenging situation in which the artist found herself at the end of her life. To borrow O'Keeffe's compelling phrase, I wrote this novel "to make the unknown known," first to myself and then to readers—to you. I am glad to be able to share my discoveries with you and to welcome your responses. If you'd like to write to me, you can use the contact form at www.susanalbert.com.

A MAP OF NORTH CENTRAL NEW MEXICO


To Black Place
Tierra Amarillo
64
522
Tusas Mountains
84
Rio Chama
Piedra Lumbre
Ghost Ranch
White Place
Rio Grande
Taos
68
Abiquiu Reservoir
Abiquiu
Pedernal
Jemez Mountains
Los Luceros
Alcalde
Espanola
Sangre de Cristo Mountains
Los Alamos
4
84
Rio Grande
Santa Fe
25

Map: Michael Wittig

PART ONE
ALWAYS NEARBY, 1941

CHAPTER ONE
MARIA: SOMEONE ALWAYS NEARBY

TIME AND PLACE

1941 was an uncertain year for Americans, with Hitler storming across Europe, occupying France and threatening England. Maria felt this uncertainty keenly because she and Dorothy Stewart had spent 1937-1938 traveling in Europe and in England, where she spent the summer of 1938 studying at Oxford.

Chapter One opens in San Antonio TX, where Maria grew up. The city had a long association with Mexico, as did the Chabot family. In fact, Maria's British grandparents had come to Santa Fe from Mexico. Her grandfather, George Stooks Chabot, served in the British foreign service in Mexico in the 1880s. George Chabot became a prosperous cotton merchant; his wife was prominent in the arts and in society. Built of native limestone in the style of Texas German Vernacular, their home at 403 Madison is now a Texas Historic Landmark.

Maria was born in 1913 and grew up down the block from her grandparents, at 427 Madison, where Chapter One takes place. Her mother, Olive, was her father's third wife. Maria's half-brother Frederick was twenty-three years old when she was born and her sister Edith was twenty. She was the only child in the house, so she was rather spoiled. Bright but uninterested in formal education, she graduated high school at fifteen (1928) and took a job as a copywriter in a department store. In 1933, not quite twenty, she traveled to Mexico City to visit her cousin, Emily Edwards, an artist, muralist, and art teacher.

That's where she met Dorothy Stewart, another artist-muralist, twenty-two years her senior. (Maria's most enduring relationships were with women, and three of these were significantly older.) The pair quickly established an exclusive friendship that lasted through 1939, when Dorothy began a relationship with Agnes Sims that continued into the 1940s. Wikipedia's biography of Maria covers the essentials.[1]

---

[1] While references to Wikipedia are not usually acceptable for scholarly work, the online encyclopedia can provide accessible and useful (if general and sometimes unverified) information. As with any online resource, readers should use it with caution. Those who want to verify facts or explore more deeply may consult the sources cited in Wikipedia entries.

WHAT HAPPENS IN THIS CHAPTER?

At the end of 1940, Maria had returned from New Mexico to spend the months from December to April at her parents' home in San Antonio, a practice she continued until the late 1950s. There, she has been helping to convert her grandparents' large and ornate home into apartments that will provide some income to her cash-strapped parents. Now, she is packing for the bus trip to New Mexico, where she will spend the next six months working for Georgia O'Keeffe at the artist's adobe house at Ghost Ranch, some sixty miles northwest of Santa Fe.

FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION

1. Maria is about to embark on a journey that her mother doesn't approve of. Mrs. Chabot objects for several reasons, some explicit, some implicit. What are they? How does Maria handle her mother's opposition? What does this say about Maria? About her mother? About their relationship? Have you ever been in a situation like this with your mother? What was involved? How did it turn out?
2. Maria has a complex relationship with Dorothy Stewart, one that is possibly foretold by choices about her gender identity (involving dress and hair style) that Maria made when she was in high school. What are these, and how are they related to her admiration for the writer, Willa Cather? Based on what Maria tells us, what do you think is the nature of her friendship with Dorothy? What makes you think this?
3. When Dorothy asks obliquely about Maria's relationship with Georgia, Maria understands that she's asking whether they are or are likely to be lovers. She replies, "No, Ducks, it isn't like that at all. And it won't be." How does Maria know this? On what is her understanding based? What does her perception of Georgia tell us about Georgia? About Maria?
4. A practical person, Mrs. Chabot tells Maria, "Of course, I always hope you'll make at least a little from your writing. Otherwise, what's the point?" What *is* the point, for Maria, of her writing? She is so far unsuccessful—why do you think she persists?
5. About O'Keeffe, Maria says, "I wanted to know her, to learn from her, to learn about her, because I wanted to *be* her." Have you ever met a person (woman or man) who attracted you in this way? How did that feel? Did it turn out the way you hoped or expected?

FOR FURTHER STUDY

Some readers like to dig deeper. For instance, you may be especially interested in how much of the story is based on facts and how much is fabricated, or you may be curious about where certain details about people and places may have come from. In this section, the first few words in bold italics at the beginning of each note are keyed to the same words in the text of *Someone Always Nearby*. Each of the notes offers additional information and author commentary: sources, background material, and bits of story that don't quite fit into the novel but deserve to be shared. The citations in parentheses refer to the "Works Cited" list at the back of this *Guide*. For the benefit of readers who might want to visit the O'Keeffe Archive in Santa Fe, we have included citations to unpublished material that can be found there.

A warning: there are spoilers in these keyed notes. If this matters to you, it's best to read the entire novel first, this *Guide* later.

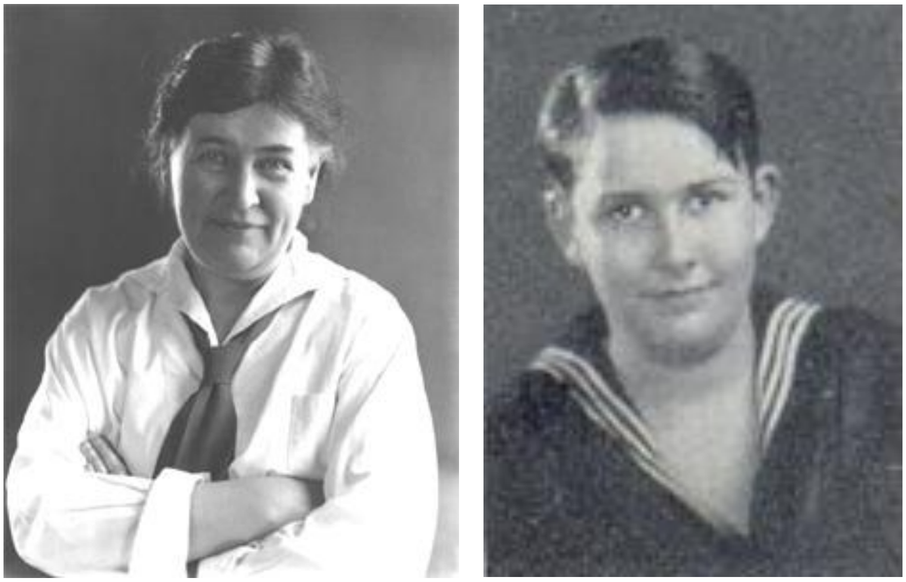
She wasn't finished. Georgia O'Keeffe and Alfred Stieglitz (at the time, twenty-eight and fifty-two) began corresponding in 1916, when she was a college art teacher and he was an internationally-known art photographer and impresario, married and a father. It isn't hard to understand why and how O'Keeffe—young, impressionable, unsure about herself as an artist and emotionally vulnerable as a woman—would fall as totally under his influence as she did.

After the two began living together in 1918, Stieglitz took many nude photographs of O'Keeffe. In the winter of 1921, he exhibited some of them at New York's Anderson Galleries. Nothing like this had been seen in the United States. The exhibit ignited a scandal and created a vision of O'Keeffe and her art from which, some suggest, she never quite recovered. It was a life-changing event and a "terrifying experience," as biographer Jeffrey Hogrefe writes. "She felt exposed—she wanted to flee from the people she felt were judging her" (Hogrefe, p. 102). Decades after she had achieved recognition as an artist and some psychological independence from Stieglitz, she would be remembered as the nude subject of his erotic photographs and her art would be critically described in sexual terms, as an "expression of unrepressed female eroticism" (Lynes, 1989, p. 2).

I tucked my huaraches. Maria and Georgia first met in early fall, 1940, at Los Luceros, the New Mexico summer home of Mary Wheelwright (1878-1958), a wealthy Bostonian. Maria had been staying at Los Luceros to finish a report on conditions on the Navajo reservation lands in northwest New Mexico, commissioned by the New Mexico Association on Indian Affairs.

After their initial lunch meeting, Georgia invited Wheelwright and Maria to her Ghost Ranch house. Several weeks later, Maria drove Georgia to Navajoland to witness the *yeibichai* dance celebrations, then to the Bisti Badlands near Chaco Canyon, which Georgia called "the Black Place." Maria describes parts of their trip in a six-page letter to her mother, Olive Chabot, written Oct. 31, 1940, from Toadlena Valley, New Mexico. She reported that she and Georgia had enjoyed a memorable lunch while the celebration was underway: tomatoes, red caviar, raw garlic, cheese, bread, tea, and a can of raspberries. They would sit up all night watching the costumed Indians dance around the roaring fires. (Maria Chabot to Olive C. Chabot, January 1939 through September 1941. Maria Chabot Papers, 2.1.2. Georgia O'Keeffe Museum)

And I began dressing like a boy. Willa Cather's inspiring sentence, "There are some girls who would make the best boys in the world if they were not girls," is from her short story, "The Way of the World" (*Home Monthly,* 1898). A 1926 photo of Willa Cather shows the resemblance that Maria may have noticed. Edward Streichen (a Stieglitz protégé and an acquaintance of O'Keeffe) took it when Cather was working on *Death Comes for the Archbishop,* which Maria would certainly have read when it was published in 1927. The novel may have helped fire her passion for New Mexico. The Cather photo was widely reprinted in magazines and newspapers at the time.



LEFT: Willa Cather, Willa Cather by Edward Steichen. Source: www.worldwar1centennial.org
RIGHT: Maria Chabot, Brackinridge High School yearbook about 1926.

Rudi Staffle, for instance. Rudolph Staffle became internationally known as a ceramist working primarily in porcelain. Born in 1911, he grew up in San Antonio, where he and Maria were acquainted. They may have traveled to Mexico City together in 1933. Maria is in touch with him in later years. The Smithsonian American Art Museum has a Staffle biography.

And Dana Bailey. Maria and Dana (whom she married in 1961 and divorced in 1962) were introduced by Maria's cousin Cresson Kearney. Both Cresson and Dana were

Rhodes Scholars. The Antarctic Service Expedition was an important opportunity for a young astrophysicist at the beginning of his career:

Or you could work. Mary Wheelwright, born in 1878 into a wealthy Boston family, would play an important role in Maria's life, bequeathing her the historic ranch, Los Luceros. The two shared an interest in Navajo mythology, which Wheelwright had studied since the early-1920s.

What's the point? A draft of Maria's article "A Portrait of the Artist at Home" can be found in her unpublished papers. (The article itself is not available online; this link is provided for the convenience of those who may want to explore the archive's holdings.) You can read Georgia's remark about wanting to "rewrite" Maria's article in the *Correspondence,* p. 1, Letter 1, January 6, 1941. As Wanda M. Corn notes in an important article, "Telling Tales: Georgia O'Keeffe on Georgia O'Keeffe," the artist "was an active participant in constructing her own celebrity, always with an eye toward managing what she felt the public should know about her." (Corn, p. 55). This was at least partly self-protective, allowing her to reject the erotically-charged image that Stieglitz's nude photos had constructed of her and replace it with images she constructed herself via clothing, hairstyle, and lifestyle.

O'Keeffe exercised this control in 1968 when she refused to give her longtime friend Anita Pollitzer permission to publish the biography she had been working on (with the artist's earlier permission) for more than a decade; it was eventually published after O'Keeffe's death (Pollitzer, 1988). She also angrily refused to cooperate with biographer Laurie Lisle (*Portrait of an Artist.*1997, pp. 43-44) and actively discouraged others from speaking with Lisle.

But the inner strength. In her biography, *Full Bloom: The Art and Life of Georgia O'Keeffe*, Hunter Drohojowska-Philp writes that Paul Strand, a friend and sometime lover, visited Georgia in Texas in 1918. To Stieglitz, he wrote that she was a "child." He added, "I don't believe she could keep a home because she couldn't do any work . . . She would have to be done for practically all the way thru" (p. 148). Drohojowska-Philp remarks (p. 73) that while the O'Keeffe family was not wealthy, Georgia and her sisters had grown up with hired help and the expectation that women in their social class did not have to do their own cooking or housework. Three of the biographers (Drohojowska-Philp, Robinson, and Hogrefe) suggest that O'Keeffe was quite capable of managing her life but adopted an appearance of helplessness in order to get people to do things for her. This was outside of her painting, of course.

What I saw when. While Georgia eventually adopted her own shorthand version of Spanglish, she never learned to speak Spanish. This made it difficult for her to communicate with the people who worked for her. Maria's fluent Spanish was essential. Maria's offer of "Lock, stock, and barrel, no strings, at no price" occurs in *Correspondence,* p. 5, Letter 7, March 28, 1941.

As I would discover. The annual one-woman New York gallery exhibits that took place from the mid-1920s through 1945 contributed enormously to O'Keeffe's popularity and financial success. No other woman painter of her time—or later, for that matter—was given the opportunity to show her new work to critics who would write about it and to patrons who were eager to buy it. These opportunities both inspired and daunted O'Keeffe, especially in years when her health was precarious or her relationship with Stieglitz was problematic, as it was after he began the affair with Dorothy Norman. O'Keefe may have been a little off-guard in 1928 when she spoke about those annual shows to Lillian Sabine, of the *Brooklyn Sunday Eagle*: "It is much more difficult to go on now than it was before. Every year I have to carry the thing I do enough further so that people are surprised again" (Sabine, "Record Price for a Living Artist. Canvases of Georgia O'Keeffe Were Kept in Storage for Three Years until Market Was Right for Them," in Lynes, 1989, pp. 288-291). The reward of these annual shows was obviously high, but the challenge of meeting and exceeding expectations every year must have been tremendously stressful.

Georgia had also written. Georgia: "Also I've felt a bit uncertain about your really liking me as something always nearby." Maria: "On the contrary I think I shall really like you as something nearby" (*Correspondence,* p. 8, Letters 11 and 12, May 12 and May 15, 1941).

And worst of all. Well educated (Princeton and Oxford) and debonair, Cresson Kearny was Maria's favorite cousin. By 1941, he was a U.S. Army captain stationed in Panama, where he was responsible for developing and testing the equipment and supplies that would be used in the tropics during WWII. He may also have been responsible for Dana Bailey's later reappearance in Maria's life. For the Edward R. Murrow quote, see Mark Bernstein's article, "Edward R. Murrow: Inventing Broadcast Journalism."

Or go back to England. The Anglo-American Ambulance Unit was founded in 1940 by a group of Americans living in London and frustrated by the U.S.'s reluctance to support the U.K. during the Blitz. Throughout the war, Maria would feel compelled to find ways to "do her part."

CHAPTER TWO
MARIA: SANTA FE

TIME AND PLACE

In the summer of 1941, Santa Fe, New Mexico, was a sleepy little town of about 20,000 residents, with a distinctly indigenous architecture, set in a stunning desert-and-mountain landscape with a healthful climate—all under the heady influence of exotic Spanish and Mexican customs. In the 1910s and early 1920s, the city began to purposefully capitalize on these differences, defining itself as a tourist destination (the "Granada of America" and the "City of a Thousand Wonders") and a healthy place to live, free of the industrial pollution of the East and the blowing dust of the Great Plains.

The City Different quickly became a Mecca for writers, artists, musicians, and nonconformists seeking a place to be more themselves, whatever that meant. Since the city welcomed independence and encouraged free expression of all sorts, women (and men, too, but especially women) who wanted to create lives outside the bounds of conventional society found it an hospitable place. Mary Austin, Willa Cather, Mabel Dodge Luhan, D.H. Lawrence, and Carl Jung are just a few of the crowd that kept coming. For some of the women artists who resided in or visited Santa Fe in the 1920s and 1930s and whom Maria would likely have known, see Michael R. Grauer's, essay, "Women Artists of Santa Fe."

Santa Fe was also the debarkation point for explorations of nearby Indian pueblos and prehistoric ruins, for hiking in the Sangre de Cristo Mountains, for horseback trekking across the Piedra Lumbre, and for catching the Chile Express to Taos, several hours to the north. In the next few years, the development of nearby Los Alamos would change the city dramatically. But when Maria Chabot gets off the bus in June, 1941, Santa Fe is still what it had been for the past three decades: a quiet desert destination for artists, tourists, and adventurous people looking for ways to test themselves.

For more background: *Santa Fe & Taos: The Writer's Era 1916-1941,* by Marta Weigle and Kyle Fiora and *Turn Left At the Sleeping Dog: Scripting the Santa Fe Legend 1920-1955,* by John Pen La Farge.

WHAT HAPPENS IN THIS CHAPTER?

Maria takes the Trailways bus (her usual pennywise mode of travel) to Santa Fe, where she visits Dorothy Stewart at her gallery-studio, catches up on Santa Fe gossip, and outlines her plans. She takes the train north to Española, where she catches the local bus that will take her to Ghost Ranch.

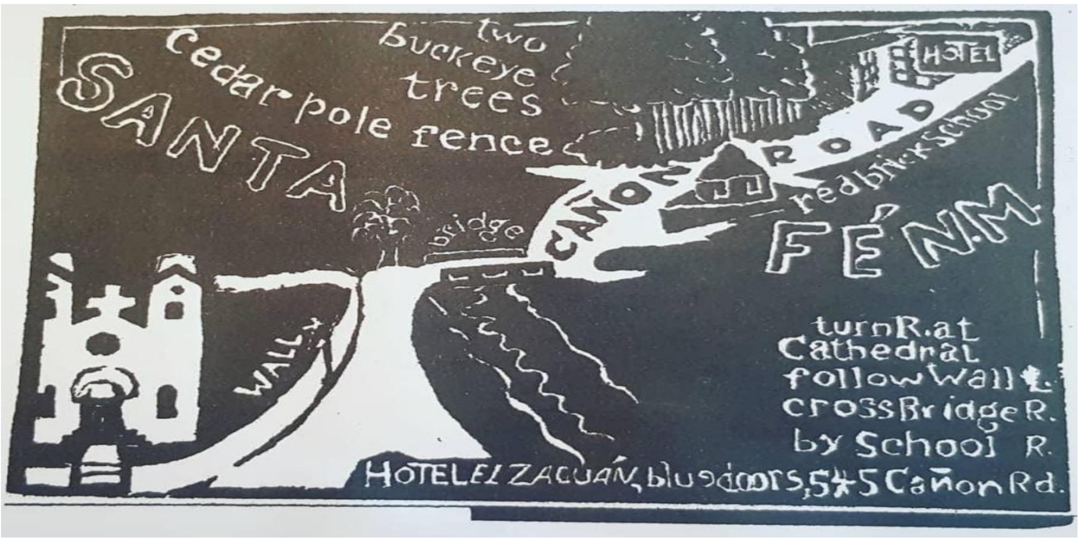
FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION

1. Each chapter begins with an epigraph—usually taken from a letter. The epigraph for Chapter Two, from a 1941 letter from Maria to Dorothy, gives us a glimpse of the real Maria's feelings for the woman she's been partnered with since 1933. What does it tell us about Maria? About the relationship? What more do we learn from the conversation between the two women?
2. O'Keeffe's spectacular earning power was the talk of the art magazines and a topic of conversation among artists. Dorothy's comment about O'Keeffe's painting for the Elizabeth Arden Salon might suggest some professional jealousy. Imagine that you are a small-town artist and the best-known, best-paid female artist in America moves from New York into your area. Might you feel jealous, too? What if your not-quite-former lover moved in with that artist? And what if that artist brought with her a reputation of some wild partying in a nearby art colony? What assumptions might you make about their relationship?
3. During the conversation with Dorothy, Maria recalls the Indian Market that she helped to establish. In 1994, Santa Fe honored Chabot for her important contributions, conferring on her the honorary title of Living Treasure and describing her contributions to the Market tradition. Does this glimpse into Maria's distant future help to understand something about the young Maria of the 1930 and 1940s?
4. These days, we can drive from Santa Fe to Ghost Ranch in an hour, and once there, we can connect with the rest of the world via cell phones and the internet. In 1941, the trip involved a train trip and a couple of hours on a pokey bus. And once you were there, the nearest telephone was almost 30 miles away. Have you ever been in a situation like Maria's, dropped off at the edge of an empty, unpeopled desert, anticipating five months of solitude with only one other person—a stranger? How did that feel?

FOR FURTHER STUDY

Some of the information in this section may be useful to even casual readers. Spending a little time reading and thinking about the Santa Fe of the 1930s and 1940s—already known as an art colony with a resident lesbian group—will help you imagine the context within which Maria's and Georgia's relationship would have been viewed by Maria's friends in Santa Fe. Some of the items contain author commentary that may suggest possible interpretations. A reminder: the keys in bold italic take you to the corresponding paragraphs in *Someone Always Nearby.*

I was on my way. Both Dorothy Stewart and her sister Margretta Dietrich contributed heavily to the diverse and inclusive life of the Santa Fe arts community and to the welfare of New Mexico Indians. Using her personal wealth, Margretta founded the nonprofit New Mexico Association on Indian Affairs (NMAIA) in order to advocate for Native Americans. Dorothy was an innovative artist who worked in many different forms (murals, printmaking, drawing, painting). She was especially interested in Native American art and in the petroglyphs she found in the Galisteo Basin south of Santa Fe, which she explored in a 1925 Austin automobile with canvas-covered hoops like a pioneer covered wagon. She acquired a press from a defunct Española newspaper and was one of the first Southwestern women to operate her own private printing press.



Print by Dorothy Newkirk Stewart: "Map to Zaguán," about 1927.

The historic Juan Jose Prado house at 519 Canyon Road, where the sisters lived, was adjacent to Margretta's equally historic El Zaguán, which she purchased in the late 1920s, restored, and used for a variety of activities—a school for a time, then rooms for friends and drop-in guests, jokingly called their "hotel." After Margretta's death in 1961, El Zaguán became the home of the Historic Santa Fe Foundation. Galleria Mexico, Dorothy's gallery and printmaking studio at 551 Canyon Road, was a popular meeting space for Santa Fe artists. Stewart also had a studio on property she owned on Atalya Hill. Upon her death in 1955, she left both studio properties to Maria. Part of the Atalya Hill property was donated to the Forest Trust and is now open to the public as the Dorothy Newkirk Stewart Trail. You can find Dorothy and Maria's correspondence (letters exchanged from 1933-1955) and Maria's writings about their relationship in the Maria Chabot Collection, Dorothy N. Stewart friendship, 1923-2001, undated. Maria

Chabot Papers, 4. Georgia O'Keeffe Museum.. Dorothy Stewart's papers are held in the New Mexico Museum of Art, Dorothy Newkirk Stewart Collection, 1930-2000. For a more complete description of Dorothy's life and work, see Jean Shapland's "New Mexico Women: Dorothy Stewart," in *Southwest Contemporary,* November 28, 2018.

The rebuilding of the Canyon Road properties (and many more) was done by architect/builder Kate Chapman, whose pivotal influence on early twentieth-century Santa Fe architecture has been explored by historic preservationist Catherine Colby, in her fascinating book, *Kate Chapman: Adobe Builder in 1930s Santa Fe.* Colby's book includes the booklet "Adobe Notes or How to Keep the Weather Out with Just Plain Mud," written by Chapman and Dorothy Stewart. Maria is sure to have relied on it—and on discussions with Stewart and Chapman—when she began to think about rebuilding O'Keeffe's Abiquiu adobe ruin. This would be an excellent topic for further study.

Beginning in 1933, Dorothy and Maria spent the better part of the next six years in an exclusive intimate relationship. Their letters reveal, however, that even after Dorothy became involved with artist Agnes Sims, they continued to care deeply for one another. "Dearest Darling Duskin," Maria addressed Dorothy in many of the letters, "Toad of My Heart" in others. They often spent time together, especially after Sims became involved with others. The Stewart -Sims relationship seems to have ended in the mid-late 1940s. Maria was with Dorothy when the artist died in Mexico City in 1955. This phot was taken in front of El Zaguán sometime in the 1940s.

Dorothy Stewart (left) with Maria Chabot (right), Unknown photographer. ca. 1947. gelatin silver print. Maria Chabot Archive. Georgia O'Keeffe Museum. Gift of Maria Chabot. [RC.2001.2.159a]

In the introduction to her play, *Georgia and the Butch,* Carolyn Gage comments that Maria might be recognized as an "archetypal lesbian butch who is rejected by a mother who cannot accommodate a gender-non-conforming daughter, and who finds herself compelled to seek out older women as romantic partners, mentors, and surrogate mother- figures." (p. 7-8) Gage's description seems to fit.

Of course not. The tale of the calla lilies is told in one version or another in most O'Keeffe biographies. Stieglitz announced (prematurely or fraudulently—opinions are mixed) the 1928 sale of six calla lily panels for the then-astonishing sum of $25,000 (some $430,000 today). The phenomenal sale suddenly catapulted O'Keeffe into an entirely new and prominent position in the art world and dramatically boosted the prices Stieglitz could demand for his wife's paintings. The much-ballyhooed purchase fell through (or never took place). But the announcement generated a great deal of publicity for O'Keeffe and had the intended effect of boosting the sales potential of her work. "She Painted the Lily and Got $25,000 and Fame For Doing It," Vladimir Berman shouted in *The New York Evening Graphic.* In fact, biographer Drohojowska-Philp says, "Stieglitz had engineered so much advance publicity that . . . the hoax had to be perpetuated and camouflaged." O'Keeffe herself was deeply embarrassed when she was forced to reluctantly validate the fiction of the sale (Drohojowska-Philp, pp. 82-84).

Room for me? While Maria's exclusive relationship with Dorothy may have been ended by mutual agreement, she was not a friend of Dorothy's new partner, Agnes (Agi) Sims. Sims came to Santa Fe in the late 1930s and stayed until her death in 1990, working as a painter, textile artist, and mentor to young artists. Like Stewart, Sims was especially interested in the petroglyphs she found in the Galisteo Basin and incorporated into the rest of her work. An entrepreneur and another rebuilder of old adobes, she rented a room (for $18 a week) to well-known lesbian poet and novelist May Sarton, after Sarton began summer visits to Santa Fe; she visited Sarton on the East Coast at least once. In the 1950s, she began a relationship with Mary Louise Aswell, retired fiction editor at *Harper's Bazaar.* The two lived together at 600 Canyon Road. For more about Sims' life and work: "Agnes C. Sims Biography," Medicine Man Gallery.

I changed the subject. Marie Armengaud, a high school French teacher who had come to Santa Fe to recover from tuberculosis, became the target of May Sarton's passionate affections. "I am very much absorbed in the discovery and love of Marie Armengaud," Sarton wrote a friend in 1940 (Peters, 1997, p. 135-136).

Olive Rush (1873–1966) was an artist, illustrator, muralist, and Native American art educator who settled permanently in Santa Fe in 1920. Jann Haynes Gilmore's biography, *Olive Rush: Finding Her Place in the Santa Fe Art Colony,* paints a memorable picture of the diverse and exciting Santa Fe art group and Rush's role in it. Maria's desire to write may have been stimulated and encouraged by the artistic activity of the women around her in this vibrant community.

A few years before. In 1936, working for Margretta Dietrich and the NMAIA, Maria had organized weekly "Indian Markets" around the Plaza, giving a major boost to the tourist economy of Santa Fe and bringing the unique work of many Indian artists and crafts people (potters, weavers, basket and jewelry makers) to wider public attention. In a 1990 interview with Molly H. Mullin, Maria recalled that she had wanted to create markets "similar to the ones in Old Mexico" that she had seen on fiesta days there.

> She suggested that the Indians be encouraged to come in by offering prizes and that once they got in to town they would undoubtedly sell

> their pottery. She suggested that Santa Fe should be publicized as a place where there was an open air market where Indian goods could be bought (Mullin, pp. 135-136).

The Indian Market became one of the largest such events in the US. For her work as an advocate for Native Americans, Maria was named a Santa Fe Living Treasure in 1994 (Richard McCord, "Santa Fe Living Treasures—Elder Stories: Maria Chabot."

I got on at Union Station. For an interesting contemporary account of the much-lamented Chile Line (the popular name for the narrow-gauge Denver & Rio Grande Western Railroad that linked Santa Fe and southern Colorado), see the Associated Press story, "Last Train Chugs Over Picturesque Colorado Railroad," *The Evening Independent,* St. Petersburg FL, September 2, 1941. The tracks were ripped up in 1942 and the iron rails recycled for the war effort.

In 1928, Edith Warner (1893-1951) became the Chile Line's station manager at Otowi Crossing, over the Rio Grande. She lived in an old adobe house that stood on the northwest side of the 1924 single-lane suspension bridge over the river. To keep busy and make a little money, she opened a small tea room. You can read about her friendship with J. Robert Oppenheimer (atomic scientist and wartime head of the Los Alamos Laboratory) and check out her recipe for chocolate cake in Patty Templeton's post, "A Print-And-Bake Chocolate Cake Recipe Straight From The Manhattan Project Era" in *Los Alamos Reporter,* November 25, 2021. For more about Warner:*The House at Otowi Bridge: The Story of Edith Warner and Los Alamos,* by Peggy Pond Church; and *The Woman At Otowi Crossing,* by Frank Waters.

I had missed lunch. In 2005, the Tewa residents of San Pablo Pueblo officially reassumed the pueblo's pre-Spanish name, Ohkay Owingeh, "Place of the Strong People." Ohkay Owingeh is now the capital of the Eight Northern Pueblos of New Mexico. The other seven are Taos, Picuris, Santa Clara, San Ildefonso, Nambé, Pojoaque, and Tesuque. Maria and Georgia used the Spanish name current at the time, San Pablo Pueblo.

The Abiquiu village mercantile—the Gonzales and Bode General Merchandise, usually known simply as "Bode's"—served as the communications hub for the people who lived in the desert and mountains around the village. It was located not far from the church at the northern edge of the village. In one corner of the store was the post office while outside were two gasoline pumps and the village power plant, a generator that provided electricity for the five families that could afford it. (See Poling-Kempes, 1997, p. 145). A phone booth was installed in the mid-1940s and villagers and ranchers no longer had to drive to Española to make a call. Martin Bode had immigrated to the United States just before WWI and worked in Gonzales' store, eventually becoming a partner. He had studied Latin and Greek and spoke both English and Spanish fluently, as well as his native German.

THE PIEDRA LUMBRE

Cerro Pedernal, viewed from Ghost Ranch.

I am the child of Changing-Woman—come! Come, come!
Sunbeams make a moving trail over it—come! Come, come!
On top of Pedernal Mountain—come! Come, come!
Where Changing-Woman was born—come! Come, come!

I arrive there too—come! Come, come!

–Navajo chant, Hosteen Klah, ceremonial singer
Recorded and transcribed by Mary Wheelwright,
Navajo Creation Myth, Santa Fe, 1942

The two central characters of *Someone Always Nearby* are Georgia O'Keeffe and Maria Chabot, each of whom is committed to making her life in a remarkable place. In this novel, brief nonfictional, non-narrative *interchapters* are intended to give you a broader, deeper sense of the extraordinary places that provided the real-life settings and social contexts for the changing lives of these women. There are four of these interchapters, focusing on the desert of the Piedra Lumbre; on Ghost Ranch, where Georgia felt most at home; on Los Luceros, where Maria would live for some fifteen years; and Abiquiu, the village where Maria built Georgia's famous studio and residence, now a Historic Landmark. Like the interchapters in John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath,* these interchapters are designed to deepen readers' understandings of the many dimensions of the novel's real places—and of the idea of *place*.

This first interchapter focuses on the vast, mountain-rimmed desert that O'Keeffe has chosen as her home, her workplace, and the subject of her paintings for the rest of her life. Having spent some time at Ghost Ranch, I can testify that the setting is quite remarkable. Even now, equipped as we are with cell phones and instant communications, the vast infinity of desert and sky can be almost overwhelming. For some, being alone in that immensity must have been terrifying.

FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION

1. In 1930, O'Keeffe wrote to a friend that New Mexico seemed to call her in a way that she was compelled to answer. Describe a place that often beckons to you. What is there about it that seems to call you to it? How do you feel when you're there, when you must leave? Why do you suppose Georgia O'Keeffe felt that New Mexico was her spiritual home?
2. Do you think Maria shared Georgia's deep connection to the desert of the Piedra Lumbre? In what ways might it have been different for her? In what ways the same?
3. Every place on our planet—even an "empty," remote place like the Piedra Lumbre—has a multidimensional history: a geological, geographical, meteorological, and social-economic history. In some places, these many-layered histories can be powerfully felt in the present. What are your thoughts on this? Consider a place or places where you might have felt the past speaking to you. What was that like for you? How do you think these pasts (plural) of the desert might have affected Georgia and Maria as they settled there?

EXPLORE ONLINE

1. View the Georgia O'Keeffe Museum's eight-minute film, "Houses of My Own." It offers the landscapes of the Piedra Lumbre, including some of O'Keeffe's work and a photo of Maria Chabot.
2. View ACB's nine-minute film, "Georgia O'Keeffe—The Far Away," including landscapes, paintings, and views of the Piedra Lumbre desert and the village of Abiquiu.

3. View Art Enigma's two-minute film, "Top 30 Georgia O'Keeffe Paintings." Many of O'Keeffe's best known works, about half of them painted in New Mexico. The film can be paused at any point to study a painting that appeals to you.

BACKGROUND READING

For an understanding of the geological, historical, and political environments of the Piedra Lumbre, I have relied on (and enjoyed) these six works, among others:

Abiquiu: The Geologic History of O'Keeffe Country, Kirt Kempter and Dick Huelster, High Desert Field Guides, 2020. Photographs, timelines, and a regional geologic map, illustrating the geologic story and landscape evolution of the region.

Acculturation in the Navajo Eden: New Mexico, 1550-1750, Seymour H. Koenig and Harriet Koenig. YBK Publishers, 2005. A study of the archaeology, ethnohistory, languages, and spiritual lives of the early people of the Southwest: where they lived, what they believed, and how they formed and re-formed their communities.

Enchantment and Exploitation: The Life and Hard Times of a New Mexico Mountain Range, University of New Mexico Press, revised ed. 2015. William deBuys. An account of the dynamic interaction between people and their environment in the Sangre de Cristo Mountains of northern New Mexico, along the eastern rim of the Piedra Lumbre).

Georgia O'Keeffe and New Mexico: A Sense of Place, by Barbara Buhler Lynes, Lesley Poling-Kempes, and Frederick W. Turner. Princeton University Press, 2004. Based on an exhibition of the same name at the Georgia O'Keeffe Museum in Santa Fe, New Mexico, this book includes fifty paintings and essays by the authors discussing the relationship of O'Keeffe's paintings to the places that inspired her.

New Mexico: An Interpretive History. Marc Simmons. University of New Mexico Press, 1988. A richly personal account by a New Mexico historian describing the centuries-long collision and intermingling of life ways—Pueblo, Spanish, and Anglo—within the alluring and forbidding landscape.

The Little Dinosaurs of Ghost Ranch, by Edwin Harris Colbert. Columbia University Press, 1995. A "paleontology case history" focused on the most ancient residents of the Piedra Lumbre, the environments in which they lived and died, and the modern discovery of their fossil remains.

Valley of Shining Stone: The Story of Abiquiu, by Lesley Poling-Kempes. University of Arizona Press, 1997. "A magic carpet to a magic land," one reviewer says about this book, indispensable for anyone who wants to understand the history, mythology, and landscapes of this region.

CHAPTER THREE
GEORGIA: CHANGING WOMAN

TIME AND PLACE

A day in late June, 1941, at Georgia O'Keeffe's recently purchased adobe house at Ghost Ranch.

WHAT HAPPENS IN THIS CHAPTER

In a theme that will thread through the novel, Georgia's mystical, highly aesthetic sense of the desert is challenged by the difficult, often brutal realities of desert life. Now, she surveys the renovations being made to her Ghost Ranch house and reflects on events that have brought her to this place and time. In the past few weeks, she has learned how difficult it is to find and keep household helpers who are willing to stay in this remote corner of the desert, locally feared as a place of witches (hence "Ghost Ranch"). Maria arrives in the afternoon, deals handily with the workmen and drives to Abiquiu to shop. Together they prepare supper and eat outdoors, on the *portal,* where they can watch Pedernal as it fades into the dusk.

FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION

1. What, specifically, are the challenges that might make life difficult for a newly transplanted homeowner in this remote place—especially for a woman who has lived her adult life in Manhattan apartments and a hotel suite? How does Georgia plan to meet those challenges? Do you think she is being realistic?
2. Georgia is not a people person. (She once famously said that if people were trees, she would like them better.) What does she like about Maria Chabot? Where does this young woman fit into her life? Do you think Maria is fully aware of Georgia's expectations, or fully able to shape herself to them?
3. There is no doubt that the desert powerfully pulls Georgia, but at the same time she is just as powerfully compelled to escape from New

York. What are the life-circumstances that make her so eager to spend half of the year somewhere else? Yet she always goes back—why? What are the ties that bind her to the city? To Alfred Stieglitz?

4. Georgia does not discuss the purchase of her New Mexico house with her husband. Instead, she writes to him with the news after the fact: "I think I must make a confession—I have put off telling you for weeks but I guess I had better tell you. I have bought this house." Why do you think she has kept this important event to herself? What might this suggest about their relationship? What does it say about *her*?

FOR FURTHER STUDY

The notes in this section fill in some of the details of Georgia's backstory: her painting career, her marriage and its problems (for example, the background sections on Alfred Stieglitz), and her stays at Ghost Ranch and purchase of the adobe ranch house from Arthur Pack.

I have bought. Georgia's letter to Alfred is quoted in Barbara Lynes' *Georgia O'Keeffe and Her Houses,* p. 7. Lynes' book is a treasure trove of photographs, house plans, and detailed information about the construction of the Ghost Ranch and the Abiquiu house. It's interesting that Georgia simply announces her cash purchase (about $65,000 in today's money) to her husband, without asking his opinion or his consultation. Her declaration of her purchase is a measure of the independence she sought from Stieglitz. She would learn, however, that living "independently" in that remote desert would be surprisingly difficult.

Georgia stands on the portal. Georgia made her first painting trip to New Mexico with her friend Beck Strand in 1929. The two women stayed at Mabel Dodge Luhan's adobe compound in Taos, where Georgia learned to drive, began painting from her Model A Ford (named "Hello"), and explored the surrounding desert and mountains. She did not enjoy the frenetic Taos social scene and she wasn't fond of Mabel, although she apparently became close friends with Mabel's Taos Indian husband. She spent the next four summers (usually June-October) at other guest ranches. But she felt besieged by too much social activity and longed for "a place where people do not run me crazy."

In 1934, she discovered Ghost Ranch, about fifteen miles northwest of the village of Abiquiu. At the time, the guest ranch was owned by Arthur Pack, a wealthy naturalist and founder of *Nature Magazine*. Georgia loved the wide skies, the stark desert, and the shimmering mountains, where she found a great many subjects to paint. Returning to Ghost Ranch in subsequent years, she rented a small cottage (usually the Garden Cottage), taking her meals in the ranch dining hall. In 1937, Pack's recently built adobe house became available and she rented it. In 1940, she purchased the house and three acres. Clearly, the land called to her in a voice she could not resist. In *Valley of Shining Stone,* Lesley Poling-Kempe writes:

> In the next five decades, O'Keeffe would make the contours and colors, the sky, clouds, bones, red hills, and blue mountains of the Piedra Lumbre and the Chama River Valley of the "Faraway Nearby" her home, her land, her world. In doing so, O'Keeffe would make this ancient high-desert plateau among the most recognized and admired landscapes in all the world (p. 280).

You can see O'Keeffe's 1941 painting of Pedernal on the O'Keeffe Museum website. The orange shape below the top of the mesa suggests Changing Woman, in her form as a deer. O'Keeffe incorporated this reference into most of her Pedernal paintings.

Georgia thinks of this. Changing Woman is an important Navajo origin spirit who created the four original Navajo clans and corn, the chief Navajo food crop. The goddess of birth, death, and rebirth, she governs the seasonal cycle as well as the cycles of human life. All Navajo ceremonies include at least one chant dedicated to Changing Woman, Maria Chabot would have become familiar with the spirit in her work with the Navajo, her studies of Navajo mythology, and her work on Mary Cabot Wheelwright's transcriptions of Navajo chants.

Life in New York. The difficulties Georgia encountered in her first year as a Ghost Ranch home owner were in strong contrast to her well-managed New York life. The exclusive Shelton Hotel where she and Stieglitz lived for the first twelve years of their marriage was the city's first high-rise residence—the "*ne plus ultra* in luxury living," as one biographer puts it. The Stieglitz's two-room suite did not include a kitchen so Georgia and Alfred took their meals out. The hotel's housekeeping staff did the cleaning and laundry (Drohojowska-Philp, p. 253). You can view the hotel itself (now the New York Marriott East Side Hotel) on this NYC/LGBT website, with several of O'Keeffe's New York paintings and the artist's remarks about the pleasures of city life. Her 1928 comment that she wouldn't run away from the city even if she could was contradicted by her practice, beginning in 1929, of living in New Mexico for half the year.

In 1936, she painted a large oil on canvas for cosmetic executive Elizabeth Arden's salon. Titled "Jimson Weed," the work brought her a stunning $10,000 fee (equal to $216,000 today)—especially astonishing given that the Depression continued to impoverish most artists. The sale enabled O'Keeffe and Stieglitz to leave the Shelton and move into larger quarters. She leased a penthouse apartment on East Fifty-Fourth and hired the first of many full-time cook-housekeepers. O'Keeffe would always find it difficult to keep household workers, but from the time of her marriage to Stieglitz until her death, she was never without them. This might be seen as ironic, since the public image she cultivated was that of a solitary, self-reliant hermit who did everything for herself.

In 2014, the painting she sold to Arden was acquired at auction for a record-shattering $44M. It hangs in the Indianapolis Museum of Art.

Here—well, it isn't. Bernice (Bernie) was Bernice Valasquez Martinez. She was eight months pregnant when Georgia let her go, perhaps because she feared that Bernie might go into labor there at the ranch. You can read about her in Georgia's June 26, 1941, letter (above) to Narcissa Swift King. There will be more of Bernie's story in Chapter Four.

Now that this house. The witches were no passing superstition. The bandit brothers were gone by 1900. But as Leslie Poling-Kempes vividly observes, for the next forty years, local folk felt that "those who camped too close to the old ranchito of the Archuletas risked attracting the attention of the resident ghosts and witches whose whimpers and wails, whispers and erratic movements spooked people and livestock alike" (Poling-Kempes, 2005, p. 15).

Bernice spoke decent English. Throughout her life, Georgia would employ people to cook, clean, and keep the household going—help that was never easy to find and (especially) to keep. She describes some of this challenge, along with a few housekeeping details, in a letter to Maria (*Correspondence,* p. 10, Letter 17, June 12, 1941). In another, deeply exasperated letter, she writes (June 26, 1941) to her friend, Narcissa Swift King (wealthy heir of the Swift meat-packing fortune):

> I had a little Spanish girl that I got in Abiquiu on my way up here the day I came she was very good–quick–clean–intelligent and very pretty but very pregnant so I let her go after about three weeks—was afraid to keep her . . . Then I had a gum chewing bouncing little piece of a white girl that I knew I couldn't keep after the first day.

The "little Spanish girl" is the very pregnant Bernie. This letter also describes some of the renovations Georgia is making to the house. You can read it on the O'Keeffe Museum's website, in Georgia's highly stylized script. (Click on the thumbnails to bring up a readable image.)

But as she picks up. Drohojowska-Philp (p. 248) makes the statement about Georgia's frequent illnesses and observes that her health markedly improved when she began spending half the year in New Mexico, away from her husband.

Alfred. She presses her lips. Long after Stieglitz's death, Georgia reflected that "the work" (her work? his work? both?) was her chief reason for staying in the marriage:

> I believe it was the work that kept me with him though I loved him as a human being. I could see his strengths and weaknesses. I put up with

> what seemed to me a good deal of contradictory nonsense because of what seemed clear and bright and wonderful. (Quoted in Drohojowska-Philp, pp. 292-293)

The six hundred fifty letters written by Georgia and Alfred and collected by Sarah Greenough in *My Faraway One* chronicle a relationship that may have been most comfortable when the lovers were miles apart and had to resort to pen and paper. As Deborah Solomon remarks in her *New York Times* review of *My Far Away One* (definitely *not* a fan rave), Stieglitz is the "most hypochondriacal of Romeos," writing plaintively about his insomnia, his headaches, his coughs. O'Keeffe, on the other hand, "retains her armor of discretion." She is "tight-lipped, nondisclosing." ("O'Keeffe and Stieglitz: Intimacy at a Distance," August 12, 2011.)

But it has always. In 1934, Georgia wrote to Stieglitz about his affair with Dorothy Newman. She didn't pull any punches. The letter is quoted in *Foursome,* Carolyn Burke's biography of the two couples, O'Keeffe and Stieglitz, Beck and Paul Strand:

> . . . All I have to say about that is that I do not for one moment accept the idea of your going about publicly making love to someone else . . . It was you who wanted me and insisted on marriage and I am inclined to feel that I had a right to expect you to respect that relation (Burke, loc. 4675).

I must be someplace. Georgia's April 26, 1934, letter to Beck Strand is included in *Georgia O'Keeffe,* edited by Cowart, Hamilton, and Greenough, p. 221.

As a girl. A classmate, Christine Cocke, vividly remembered Georgia's remark about using people to get what she wanted (quoted in Robinson, p. 67). In the end, of course, Stieglitz secured her career as an artist and Maria made sure she had the house she wanted.

In the meantime. Because of owner Arthur Pack's social status, the guests at Ghost Ranch weren't ordinary dudes. Among the visitors in the 1930s were Charles and Anne Lindbergh, composer Leopold Stokowski, and Maggie and Robert Wood Johnson (of Johnson & Johnson Pharmaceuticals). David McAlpin, director of photography at the Museum of Modern Art, was there, as well as photographer Ansel Adams, who was just beginning his career and eager for a connection to Stieglitz (Robinson, p. 576). Even so, as Arthur Pack says, Georgia was "chary of her friendships" and "carefully avoided the common variety of dudes" (Pack, p. 62). When she couldn't avoid them, she was often rude. "You are bothering me," she said to one hapless Ghost Ranch guest (Hogrefe, p. 223). Her regretful remark, "If only people were trees, I might like them better," was made to interviewer Frances O'Brien in 1927 (Drohojowska-Philp, p. 278). It is worthwhile noting that very few of O'Keeffe's paintings included people.

To be fair. One of the Packs' guests remarked that there was "something witchy" about Georgia: "Those long dresses. And the bones. She was always carrying a bone with her. She seemed to know something we did not" (Hogrefe, p. 173). Hogrefe adds, "She may not have found her people, but she had found her place. She called it 'The Faraway.'"

***A resolute wife*.** In *Portrait of an Artist* (the first O'Keeffe biography to be published), Laurie Lisle writes about Stieglitz's rages, which she learned of from Herbert Seligmann, the "friend" in this passage (from the 1997 edition of Lisle's work):

> When Georgia, in effect, rejected [Stieglitz's] image of her, refusing to give in to his articulate arguments that she didn't need to travel and that it was risky to do so, he grew tremendously angry and viewed her increasing autonomy as disloyalty. Defied, he was capable of being dangerous and destructive. Once, in the early thirties, he began to rage about Georgia in vulgar language in front of one of his disciples. The friend was shocked, having never heard Stieglitz speak that way about a woman before. When he started to protest, Stieglitz, still ranting, suddenly crouched before him for greater emphasis, his fist clenched and his face close to his, so that the man could see clearly the black eyes glowing and the tufts of white bristles shooting out of Stieglitz's ears and nostrils. Stieglitz was an aging, possessive husband, hurt and frightened because he was unable to fulfill the need that New Mexico met for his wife. His creativity had once been ignited by her, and, perhaps, he associated it with her and feared that his spirit would be sapped by her absence (Lisle, 1997, p 255).

There had been. "It was more than a sale," Hogrefe says, "it was a truce." The temporary cease-fire did not, however, end the continuing warfare between O'Keeffe, the Packs, and their guests. Because Phoebe Pack was willing to speak candidly to Hogrefe, he has the most detailed and personal account of this difficult relationship (Hogrefe, p. 193).

Alfred has gradually. For a full discussion of the long-term effect of Stieglitz's Freudian interpretations of Georgia's work and her reactions to it, as well as a view of Stieglitz as an able and energetic promoter of his wife's paintings, see Lynes (1989). Vivien Green Fryd argues that O'Keeffe's painting "Radiator Building" (1927) is an explicit visual expression of the artist's rejection of the Freudian readings of her work by Stieglitz and his circle: "It does so ironically and humorously, presenting Stieglitz in obvious phallic terms to provoke her viewers to think again about the Freudian interpretations of her works" (Fryd, p. 288).

Your paintings. Robinson, p. 285.

Ironically, Dorothy. Dorothy Norman was an important force the lives of both Stieglitz and O'Keeffe. Stieglitz's affair with her begins in 1927 and continues to his death in 1946. Unfortunately, her very real talents as a photographer and writer and her civil rights activism have been overshadowed by her relationship with Stieglitz. Dorothy tells her own version of the affair in *Encounters: A Memoir* (1987). Drohojowska-Philp discusses Stieglitz's possible paternity of Norman's second child (p. 325).

Georgia isn't a prude. The episode with Tony Lujan is described in Chapter 14 of *Foursome,* by Carolyn Burke. Georgia's relationship with Jean Toomer is best told in Chapter 24 of Robinson's biography. "That fellow in Hawaii" was Willis Jennings, manager of the Ka'eleku Sugar Plantation on Maui. In 1939, Georgia was in Hawaii in Spring, 1939, on a three-month painting tour funded by the Dole Company. She stayed at the sugar plantation for several weeks as Jennings' guest. Mrs. Jennings was away at the time, but their twelve-year-old daughter Patricia was there and noticed the flirtation between O'Keeffe and her father. She writes about it in her 2011 book, *Georgia O'Keeffe's Hawai'i*:

> That night, as I lay across my bed, elbows on the windowsill, I looked out at the bright silvery moon, thinking how beautifully it shone on our yard. I heard voices and saw the dark figures of Dad and Georgia strolling hand-in-hand through the garden.

"At lunch the next day," she adds with a knowing candor, "Dad and Georgia looked rested and content" (Jennings and Ausherman, p. 56).

It finally happened. For details of this painful period, see Robinson, Chapter 24, where Georgia's various illnesses are also discussed. "She had lost her sense of direction and of confidence," Robinson says.

> She had allowed Stieglitz to invade and control her aesthetic life, as he had taken charge of all other aspects of her life. She had delivered herself up to him, leaving herself no central core. If his behavior was destructive, hers was self-destructive, and she recognized her defeat at her own hands (Robinson, p. 492).

Stieglitz's niece, Sue Davidson Lowe, writes in her biography of her uncle that Georgia once remarked that "Alfred was happiest when I was ill in bed because he knew where I was and what I was doing" (Lowe, *Stieglitz: A Memoir/Biography,* p. 323).

C.S. Merrill, one of O'Keeffe's later caregivers, offers an interesting insight into what might have been behind some of O'Keeffe's frequent bouts of illness. O'Keeffe once said that she had read many articles about women's sports accomplishments, and that she thought it was a mistake to appear too robust. She told Merrill, "We can act weak and sick and female all the while knowing secretly that we are very strong" (Merrill, p. 74).

When she recovered. Georgia apparently hadn't known that Jean Toomer and her friend Marjorie Content were involved when she agreed to go to Bermuda with Marjorie. When the two married, Drohojowska-Philp says, she felt betrayed by both: "She had expected [Toomer] to pursue her, or wait for her, or adore her from a distance" (p. 354).

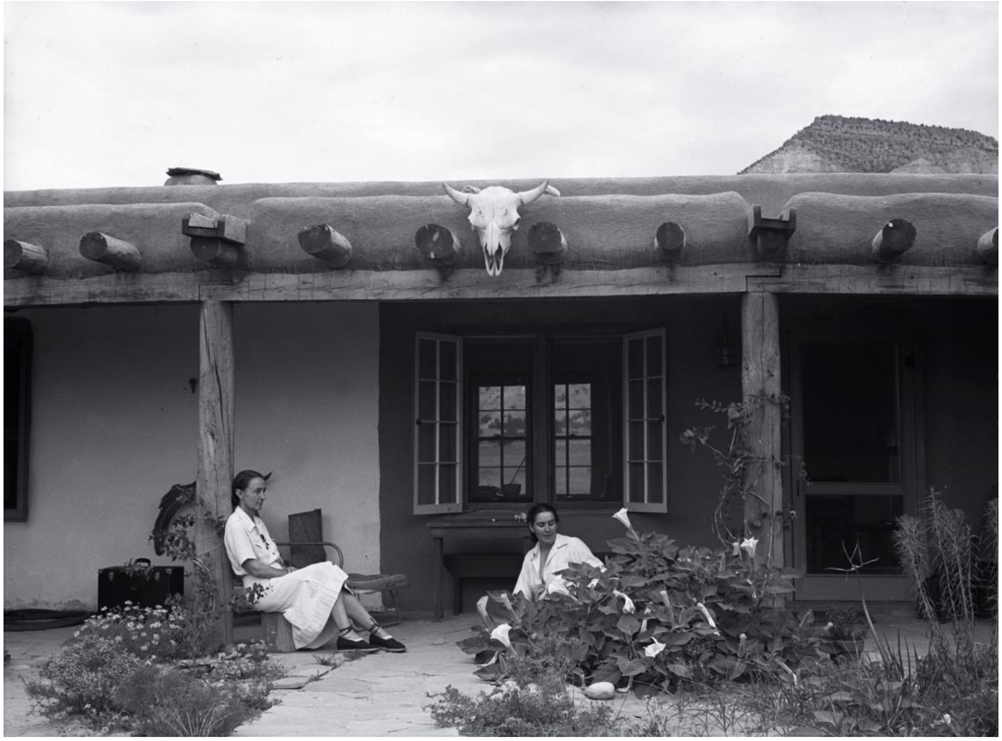
And she knows. McBride's slighting remark about the "newspaper personality" is from his review, "O'Keeffe at the Museum," *New York Sun*, May 18, 1946. It is quoted in Lisle, 1997, p. 150.

Georgia recognized. All of the O'Keeffe biographers did their work before the Chabot-O'Keeffe letters were published, so none were able to fully assess Chabot's role in O'Keeffe's life in the 1940s. Of the biographers, however, Robinson seems to understand Maria better than the others. She writes:

> The two women shared a number of characteristics: both were strong, opinionated, and forceful . . . They were devoted to the southwestern landscape; both were aesthetically sophisticated, visually and aurally, and they shared similar musical tastes. Educated, capable, and fiercely independent, Chabot was an ideal companion for O'Keeffe, who needed someone to run the practical side of her household so that she could devote her energies to painting. Chabot had no income and wanted to become a writer. O'Keeffe offered her room and board in exchange for taking care of the mechanics of their daily life. Chabot would write and O'Keeffe would paint, Chabot would look after the household and O'Keeffe would pay for it (Robinson, p. 607).

And then she climbs. Flora Martinez Brunette was a landowner who lived in the tiny village of Barranco, just west of Abiquiu. Maria made sure that O'Keeffe's table was supplied with Flora's fresh vegetables, fruits, eggs, and milk.

GHOST RANCH



Georgie O'Keeffe and Maria Chabot at Ghost Ranch, near Abiquiu, ca. 1941-1942.
Photographer: John Candelario. Negative Number: 165668. Courtesy Palace of the Governors Photo Archives

> "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 . . . pink and purple hills in front and the scrubby fine dull green cedars—and a feeling of much space—It is a very beautiful world."
>
> —Georgia O'Keeffe to Arthur Dove, September, 1942

My wife and I were looking for a new home—a place where a half-remembered flat-topped mountain stood sentinel over a grassy basin rimmed with sheer sandstone cliffs of pink, purple and gold . . . [We

> drove] some seventeen miles through the tortuous Chama Canyon and finally up and out across a sea of dry grassland dotted with juniper and piñon . . . We turned off on a mere track marked only buy a cow's skull propped against a rock, slid down an incredibly steep hill, [and] crossed a creek on a narrow log bridge. Close in under the sheltering protection of magnificent buttes and sheer sandstone cliffs huddled a single low adobe building whose every door and window staggered crookedly. From it appeared a woman who spoke in cultured tones, unmistakably Bostonian, "Welcome to Ghost Ranch," she said.
>
> —Arthur Pack, We Called It Ghost Ranch

This brief interchapter focuses on the people-history of Ghost Ranch, from the renegade bandit brothers to Carol Stanley and Arthur Pack to Georgia O'Keeffe. Here are some of the sources that were consulted to create this brief history of Ghost Ranch. But nothing can substitute for a visit—better yet, a long stay. It is truly an enchanted place.

For Your Consideration

1. New Mexico attracted many interesting women, such as Carol Stanley, Brownie Pack, Georgia O'Keeffe, and Maria Chabot. What do these women have in common, besides their love of the desert? For other intrepid adventurers in the Southwest outback—Mary Austin, Natalie Curtis, Mary Cabot Wheelwright, Mabel Dodge Luhan, Alice Corbin, and more—read Lesley Poling-Kempes' book, *Ladies of the Canyon* (see below).
2. The interchapter brings the history of Ghost Ranch out of the 1940s to the current time. What do you think makes the ranch so attractive to so many different visitors? Is it a place you would like to visit?

Explore Online

1. O'Keeffe's house is not (at this time) open to the public, but you can make a virtual visit in this 58-minute O'Keeffe Museum film, "Growing Up with O'Keeffe: Preserving the Historic Ghost Ranch Home." Agapita Lopez, a longtime associate of O'Keeffe, describes her experience and tells the story of the artist's Ghost Ranch house, illustrated with floor plans and photographs, many taken by Maria Chabot.
2. Watch a 13-minute multi-season time-lapse photographic series, "The View from Georgia O'Keeffe's House at Ghost Ranch."

3. Watch a nine-minute film, "Georgia O'Keeffe—The Far Away," that includes landscapes, paintings, and views of Abiquiu.

BACKGROUND READING

Ghost Ranch Education and Retreat Center. The Ranch's website offers photographs of the desert, cliffs, and escarpments and information about a visit.

Lynes, Barbara Buhler. *Georgia O'Keeffe and Her Houses,* Harry N. Abrams, 2012. A stunning coffee table book that offers interior and external views of both the Ghost Ranch and the Abiquiu houses, with details of construction, furnishings, and O'Keeffe's residencies.

Pack, Arthur. *We Called It Ghost Ranch.* Ghost Ranch Conference Center, 1966. A very personal memoir by the founder and first editor of *Nature Magazine,* who bought Ghost Ranch, invested a decade in making it a vacation getaway for those who could afford a season of life in the desert, and then generously gave it to an organization that promised to serve as perpetual stewards of a fragile land.

Poling-Kempes, Lesley. *Ghost Ranch.* University of Arizona Press, 2005. Building on the history of the Piedra Lumbre that she created in *Valley of Shining Stone*, Poling-Kempes traces the transformation of remote Ghost Ranch from a hideout for outlaws to a 1930s dude ranch for wealthy Easterners to a retreat for twenty-first-century desert pilgrims.

Poling-Kempes, Lesley. *Ladies of the Canyon: A League of Extraordinary Women and Their Adventures in the American Southwest.* University of Arizona Press, 2015. The true but almost forgotten stories of four extraordinary women who traded their genteel Victorian lives for the infinitely more challenging deserts and mountains of the American Southwest. You'll want to read the story of Carol Bishop Stanley, who moved herself and her grand piano to Ghost Ranch in 1931—and then left it to marry a cowboy.

CHAPTER FOUR
MARIA: THE FIRST YEAR

TIME AND PLACE

June-December, 1941, at Georgia O'Keeffe's Ghost Ranch house.

WHAT HAPPENS IN THIS CHAPTER

Maria describes the daily life at Ghost Ranch, as well as painting trips to the White Place and the Black Place and a trip to Colorado to locate the father of Bernie's baby. The chapter ends with Georgia's November return to New York and Maria's return to her parents' home in San Antonio the week before Christmas.

The story told here is based on the thirty-nine letters the women exchanged during 1941 (January-June, November-December) as well as on unpublished letters Maria wrote to her mother and to Dorothy Stewart and on Maria's unpublished manuscript, "Life With O'Keeffe." Details of daily activities around the ranch are based on letters Georgia wrote to Stieglitz in 1942-1944 and accessible in the extensive Stieglitz correspondence collection on the O'Keeffe Museum's website.

FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION

1. Maria says that she understands and accepts Georgia's expectations of her employees. But at the same time, she wants to consider herself a friend, not an employee. How does this complicate their relationship? Have you ever found yourself in such a situation—on one side or the other? Were you able to resolve it comfortably?
2. Maria feels that the episode with Bernie's baby might have been prompted by Stieglitz's refusal to allow Georgia to have children. Do you agree? What might it show about O'Keeffe herself?
3. Speaking of Stieglitz's nude photographs, Georgia tells Maria that they "had nothing to do with me—with me personally, I mean. When I look at them, I wonder who that person is." Why do you think O'Keeffe was willing to pose nude for Stieglitz? Is that something you would have done? Why/why not? How do you think O'Keeffe felt at

the time about the gallery show where the photos were exhibited, and about viewers' responses to them? What effect might it have had on her later life choices?

4. When she posed for Stieglitz, Georgia was young, emotionally vulnerable, and professionally a novice, in contrast to Stieglitz's position as one of the best-known artists of his time. How does "love" complicate a situation like this?
5. Feminists use the term "the male gaze" to describe the sexualized presentation of women's bodies as the passive objects of men's desires. What happens if we use this idea as a frame within which to view Stieglitz's nude photographs of his lover? Does it change our view of Stieglitz? Of Georgia?

FOR FURTHER STUDY

While there's a great deal written about Georgia's art, her life with Stieglitz, and her much later life in New Mexico, there's almost nothing available about life on the ranch in the early 1940s. This chapter will give you a sense of the major challenges that Georgia and Maria faced in the first year. The entries below offer more detail about the time and place, as well as introducing a theme that persists throughout the novel: O'Keeffe's difficult relationships with the people who supported her.

That first year. Maria's skill with tools—a hammer and saw, a shovel, a carpenter's level—and her willingness to do physical work were an important asset to Georgia in the early years at the ranch. Add to that her ability to manage the local workers in Spanish and her familiarity with construction methods (perhaps gained through her work on her grandparents' San Antonio house), and it is no wonder that Georgia found her indispensable. Mr. Peabody was the original builder of the house for Arthur Pack, in the mid-1930s.

I had spent. Arthur Pack writes that getting anywhere in that area could be a major challenge. "The sixty-five mile dirt road to Santa Fe had few bridges or even culverts and one was as likely to be stuck in dry sand in good weather as mired to the hubs following a rain" (Pack, p. 35). The highway between Abiquiu and Tierra Amarilla wasn't paved until after the war. Benina Abeyta was one of the more successful workers; she continued to keep house for Georgia through the 1940s.

Which, as Georgia. How to treat the people who worked for her was a vexed and vexing question that O'Keeffe never quite resolved. It proved to be the central issue in the Chabot-O'Keeffe relationship during the 1940s and was still an issue in the 1970s and 1980s, as Carol Merrill—a later caregiver—candidly reveals in *Weekends with O'Keeffe.*

We are likely to cringe at the word "slave," which Georgia uses in her letters and reported conversations. It might be dismissed as a thoughtless term of the times, and perhaps it is. But her frequent uses of it also reflect her proprietary attitude about the people she hired (and fired) and something of her lack of empathy for them. In New York, she clearly preferred to employ Northern European women. In 1943, she writes to Maria, "Finally I have a new slave who looks hopeful—young—and quick—good looking and Irish" (*Correspondence,* p. 136, Letter 100, November 16, 1943). Throughout the mid-1940s, she hires a procession of women from Ireland, Finland, Sweden, and Russia, none of whom last very long. In 1946, she tells Maria that she is looking for a "Nordic slave" (Letter 45, pp. 348-349, April 11, 1946). In a letter to Stieglitz's nephew, Howard Schubart, she tells him to drop in at the gallery and "see the kind of slave I have," referring to her skilled, Wellesley-educated assistant, Doris Bry (Cowart et al. p. 253). She preferred to be the one who did the firing; when her "slave" Dorothy Fredericks turned in her resignation, refusing to cook a meal for unexpected company, O'Keeffe exclaimed, "You can't quit me. No one quits me!" (Hogrefe, p. 272).

In New Mexico, many of the people who worked for Georgia were Genízaros, people who claim both Spanish and Native American ancestry. (In 2007, the New Mexico legislature recognized Genízaros as "indigenous people.") In his revealing little book, *The Genízaro and the Artist,* Napoleón Garcia, an O'Keeffe gardener for many years, describes his often uncomfortable relationship with O'Keeffe as partly due to the artist's sense of her status as a *patrona* and what he terms "unconscious discrimination." She believed him to be a "lazy Genízaro," Garcia writes, "taking advantage of her employment by working only half the time [and] by not pushing a full load with each step" (Garcia, p. 34, pp. 33-38).

Hogrefe (p. 195) writes that, in conversation with others, O'Keeffe frequently referred to Maria as her slave. Maria, who had no financial resources of her own and jokingly called herself O'Keeffe's "hired man," told biographer Benita Eisler in 1987 that Beck Strand had been Georgia's first slave. "I was the second," she said (Eisler, p. 472). She recognized that there were many others. "I don't think [Georgia] had relationships," she told Sharon Niederman of the *Santa Fe Reporter* in 1992. "Her whole aim in life was to work. Everyone in her vicinity had to help that work. I helped by doing the hard work that had to be done" (Wallis, p. 138).

And some fifty years later, in a 1992 interview with anthropologist Molly H. Mullin, Maria revealed the enduring sense of the unalterable economic and social inequalities that set her apart not only from O'Keeffe but from women like Mary Cabot Wheelwright and Margaretta Dietrich. "I made the tea," she said flatly. "And they drank it. That's just the way it was" (Mullin, p. 85).

Earlier in her life, O'Keefe revealingly uses the term "slave" to refer to herself when she is deeply involved with someone. In a 1917 letter to Paul Strand, she writes about the glorious freedom she feels, having broken off her relationships with Ted Reid and Arthur Macmahon: "It is a feeling of mastery of myself. I always feel like a sort of slave when I am liking anyone very much" (quoted in Drohojowska-Philp, p. 141).

Of course, since. Georgia gave Maria a monthly allowance of fifty dollars, from which Maria was supposed to buy food, supplies, and gas. Anything left over, she was free to keep for herself. She also got room and board and was supposed to have a half-day off for her writing. This arrangement allowed Georgia to see Maria as hired help—and as a "slave," when she was talking to others about her. But since there was no direct payment involved, it also allowed Maria to see herself as a friend, offering freely of her time and her skills to help a friend who needed her. She told friends that she didn't "work for" Georgia (Hogrefe, p. 195) and she avoided the subject with her parents. O'Keeffe's habit of sending an additional amount of money as an occasional end-of-year thank-you gift reinforced Maria's sense of the situation. For instance, after she returned to New York in 1941, Georgia sent Maria a check for three hundred dollars, amounting to an additional fifty dollars a month for the six months Maria had worked for her—the 2022 equivalent of about $230 a week (*Correspondence,* pp. 13-14, Letter 19, November 19, 1941).

A few months later, further reinforcing the idea that working for her was a matter of friendship, Georgia wrote, "I must add that I cannot afford to pay a good hired man like you" (*Correspondence,* p. 38*,* Letter 11, May 8, 1942). Seizing on this opportunity to declare herself a friend, Maria admonished, "Don't you know that you don't pay for the good things of life—an O'Keeffe canvas excepted?" (Letter 12, p. 38, after May 8, 1942). The exchange highlights the vexing confusion of roles that would haunt Maria until she finally completed Georgia's Abiquiu house in 1949 and payment for her services ceased to be an issue.

Or book. I was sure. Maria persisted in her attempts to write about her life with Georgia at Ghost Ranch. As archivists have reconstructed the manuscript, "Life With O'Keeffe" consists of three sections, some 360 pages, most of them typewritten. The work shows that Maria had a sharp eye for anecdotal detail, a strong appreciation of landscape, and a special affinity for the native people who lived and worked in the Piedra Lumbre ("Life With O'Keeffe" manuscript, undated. Maria Chabot Papers, 3.5.2. Georgia O'Keeffe Museum.) Her most readable pieces are the articles on Indian art published by *New Mexico Magazine* in the mid-1930s. The manuscript pages of her novel about Mexico are dated through 1977, indicating that she continued to work on that project for several decades, as she could make time in her busy life. (As she often remarked, she had to make a living, and writing wasn't earning any money.) Here is the Museum's description of the surviving material in her extensive collection:

> There are more than 60 drafts or completed short stories, novels, and non-fiction materials that Chabot generated over the years, along with rejection letters she received from publishers; copies of the published articles on Indian arts and crafts that she wrote in the 1930s; and documents, notes, photographs, records and reports she generated when attending conferences, taking courses, and working on various projects. Chabot undertook significant projects in the 1930s and 1940s,

> including a photographic survey of Southwestern native and traditional arts and crafts with artist Dorothy N. Stewart . . . and an unpublished book on her time as a companion of Georgia O'Keeffe at Ghost Ranch and the renovation of O'Keeffe's home in Abiquiu, New Mexico (Research and writing, 1891-2001, undated. Maria Chabot Papers, 3. Georgia O'Keeffe Museum).

By all accounts, she was a lively conversationalist and the strong, engaging voice of her letters conveys a sense of intensely personal and animated dialogue. She could turn a phrase and construct an anecdote, but it seems to have been difficult for her to achieve a coherent sense of a whole piece of long-form writing. She tried various organizations of "Life With O'Keeffe" and was never able to find a satisfactory way to pull the fragments together.

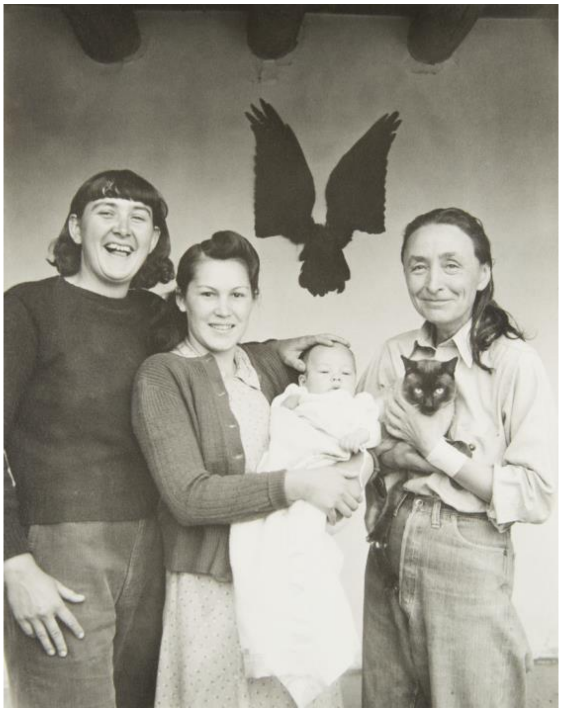
And with such health. To her friend Richard Pritzlaff, Georgia described Maria as "a great girl, so healthy that I believe it is contagious for me, as I am feeling unusually fine" (Hogrefe p. 195). She also spoke admiringly of Maria's health and vitality to Stieglitz.

For one thing. Once Maria and Georgia were in residence at the ranch, they did not write to one another. The best record of their daily activities during these months are the letters that Georgia wrote to Stieglitz. The more than two hundred chatty and detailed letters help to paint a picture of an active life that is quite crowded with guests—nothing at all like the image of the solitary hermit-artist that O'Keeffe presented to her public. The pleasure of reading the letters is worth the extra effort of deciphering Georgia's ornate script.

The guest situation. The many visitors during the summer of 1941 set the pattern for the following summers and would, in fact, become the wedge that drove Maria away from the ranch. Managing a remote household of two or three people was difficult enough, given the problematic food and water situation. Add four or six additional people and the situation must have rapidly spun out of control. The guests identified here were frequent July-August visitors during the war years. They dropped in for stays of a few days to a week or more, requiring Maria to manage additional meals, laundry, and transportation. Her expectation of the half-days free for her writing (promised as one of the incentives for her non-salaried work) would have quickly evaporated.

I had two guests. Maria had known Tony (Anton) Long since the mid-1930s. His father, poet and novelist Haniel Long, was a well-known Santa Fe publisher and a friend of Dorothy Stewart's. Tony enlisted and served in the South Pacific. For a time in the spring of 1944, in letters to Dorothy, Maria (seriously or not) weighs the idea of marrying Tony after the war and concludes that it wouldn't be good for either of them. We don't know the name of the friend whom Georgia turned away. Rudi Staffle is one possibility. Or Dana Bailey, to whom Maria would be briefly married sixteen or seventeen years later.

There's a funny. The story of Georgia's extraordinary effort to locate Max Martinez and arrange for Bernice Velasquez to marry him is related by most of the artist's biographers, in varying versions. The story that Maria tells her mother in her funny, fascinating five-page letter of September 11, 1941, is contemporaneous with the event and is certainly the most detailed account. I have used her version of events in the novel. (Maria Chabot to Olive C. Chabot, September 11, 1941, in 1939 January through 1941 September. Maria Chabot Papers, 2.1.2. Georgia O'Keeffe Museum)



Unknown. Maria, Bernie, Little Max, The Gato, and Georgia O'Keeffe, 1941.
Gelatin silver print, 9 5/8 x 7 1/2 inches. Georgia O'Keeffe Museum. Museum Purchase. [2014.3.99]

Thinking about this. About "the curse," Robinson observes:

> Women have been known to conceive in spite of a husband's objections, but to become pregnant surreptitiously would have been difficult with Stieglitz as a partner . . . "The Curse" was an important factor in their household; travel plans revolved around it, days off from painting were scheduled because of it, and moods and tempers were assigned to its influence" (Robinson, p. 311).

***Unfair?** Perhaps*. Biographer Drohojowska-Philp says that Stieglitz's relationship with money was conflicted and complicated (p. 176). On the one hand, he argued that artists must be content to work for the love of the art, while on the other, he set the highest possible prices for his wife's work. In her sophisticated reading of O'Keeffe's 1927 painting, "Radiator Building," Vivien Green Fryd remarks on this contradiction, strongly implicit in Stieglitz's rejection of the commercialization of art while he was clearly engaged in the art business:

> Despite his protests against the marketing of art and his continual claim that he was not a salesman, Stieglitz indeed sold works in his gallery for financial profit, even if his only motive was to enable his friends and wife to continue producing . . . [O'Keeffe's painting "Radiator Building"] ironically proclaimed [Stieglitz] as the modern man of commerce, the scientific American who embodied contradictions between his repeated and insistent protests against the commercialization of art and his actions in selling works of art for profit (Fryd, p. 277).

And art historian, author, and curator MaLin Wilson describes Stieglitz's shrewd salesmanship in her essay, "An American Phenomenon: On Marketing Georgia O'Keeffe," in *From the Faraway Nearby: Georgia O'Keeffe as Icon*:

> Stieglitz initiated O'Keeffe's market with an aura of secrecy, insuring that only the wealthy and privileged might possess her masterpieces. Stories abound of Stieglitz's interrogation of prospective clients, who had to prove themselves worthy of owning an O'Keeffe . . . As a career manager for Miss O'Keeffe, [he] cannily exploited the principles of supply, demand, and anticipation (Wilson, p. 86).

These principles—supply, demand, and anticipation—were carefully built into the annual O'Keeffe show that Stieglitz announced for February and March, and which resulted in strong sales and the cultivation of continuing demand, even during the dismal years of the Depression. The production pressures imposed on the artist by this rigorous schedule must have been in O'Keeffe's mind in 1928 when she spoke about those annual shows to reporter Lilian Sabine: "Every year I have to carry the thing I do enough further so that people are surprised again" (Sabine, "Record Price for a Living Artist. Canvases of Georgia O'Keeffe Were Kept in Storage for Three Years until Market Was Right for Them," in Lynes, 1989, pp. 288-291). "Surprising" the critics with new work may have been one of the reasons Georgia offered her husband for her first (1929) trek to New Mexico, where she found regional subjects that might seem exotic and different to East Coast art patrons.

The Bernie-and-baby excursion. Maria took Georgia on several painting trips in 1941, and Georgia produced paintings from both sites. The White Place, Plaza Blanca, is located on what is now the property of the Dar Al Islam, an Islamic education center in the Chama hills north of Abiquiu. You can read an extended description and view some remarkable photographs of this site in Giustina Renzoni's post, "Report from the Faraway: Plaza Blanca," on the Georgia O'Keeffe Museum's website, You can see a 1943 White Place painting on the Art Institute of Chicago's website. Scroll down for additional O'Keeffes.

The Black Place, in the Bisti Badlands of northwestern New Mexico, is a region of shale, sandstone, and coal deposits, weathered by wind and water into exotic shapes. It was harder to reach than the White Place and required a difficult drive and a multi-day stay, often in uncertain weather. Georgia's comment about the elephants comes from her autobiography, *O'Keeffe*, by Georgia O'Keeffe (no page numbers). For photographs and some description of the exotic formation in this region, visit the American Southwest's website, "Bisti Wilderness Area." In 1944, O'Keeffe painted at least three versions of this scene: "Black Place I," "Black Place II," and "Black Place III."

O'Keeffe was inspired by many landscapes in the Piedra Lumbre. Pedernal, the flat-topped mountain south of Ghost Ranch, was the subject of at least twenty-nine paintings and drawings, fourteen of them completed in the 1940s. She also loved the red hills, a short walk away from the house, and the rainbow-hued cliffs that rise behind the Ghost Ranch house, which she could see from her studio window.

It's the strangeness. The phrase "making the unknown known" is from O'Keeffe's 1925 letter to author Sherwood Anderson:

> I feel that a real living form is the natural result of the individual's effort to create the living thing out of the adventure of his spirit into the unknown—where it has experienced something—felt something—it has not understood—and from that experience comes the desire to make the unknown—known (quoted in Drohojowska-Philp, p. 156).

And Georgia introduced. The Mensendieck isometric exercise program was popular in the 1920s and 1930s. Georgia was a disciplined practitioner and recommended the program to women she knew, including her sisters. It is likely that the exercises contributed to her erect posture and gracefully disciplined movements, even in old age. Participants often exercised in the nude.

I dared to ask. Georgia's remark, "Those photographs had nothing to do with me—with me personally, I mean," is reported by Anita Pollitzer in *A Woman on Paper* (p. 168). O'Keeffe herself wrote "When I look at them, I wonder who that person is" (*O'Keeffe*, n.p.) Stieglitz seems to have thought she found an erotic pleasure in the nudes: "Whenever she looks at the proofs," he wrote to Paul Strand in 1918, "she falls in love with herself—Or rather her Selves—There are very many" (quoted in Lynes, 1989, p. 56).

It may be interesting to consider the Stieglitz photos of O'Keeffe in the context of the history of nude photography and their relationship to the nude in painting.

The war had already. The San Antonio blackout drill (described in "WWII in San Antonio: Air Raids to Foreign Aid") became a model for the rest of the country. The city may have been atypical in its early preparations and response because it was the site of several permanent military installations and a hub for the gathering of supplies, equipment, and personnel. In the letters Maria wrote from San Antonio during the war, she often commented on military activity in the city.

All my friends. While the conscription of women never came to pass, it loomed as a constant possibility in the minds of young American women who saw their friends, brothers, and husbands being drafted and wondered when it might be their turn. There was also constant speculation on the subject in newspapers and magazines, keeping the issue before the public. Judith A. Bellafaire provides some context in "The Women's Army Corps: A Commemoration of World War II Service," on the website of the Center for Military History. Maria seems to have viewed military service as a possible escape from the present situation. In 1943, when she was coping with the aftermath of her half-brother Fred's death and her father's illness, she wrote to Dorothy that when her spirits fell very low, she sought the "furthest evasion, the WAACs" (Letter to Dorothy Stewart, February 24, 1943).

PART TWO:
THE FARAWAY 1942-1944

CHAPTER FIVE
GEORGIA: NEW YORK

TIME AND PLACE

February through June, 1942, the first months after America's entry into the war. New York City; Madison, Wisconsin; New Mexico.

WHAT HAPPENS IN THIS CHAPTER

Like every other American, Georgia must adjust her New York life to the demands of the war. She hangs her annual show at An American Place, but the response is disappointing—art critics and friends of her work have other things on their mind. Rail travel has become challenging, but she goes to Wisconsin (her home state) to receive an honorary doctorate from the University and to Taliesin to visit architect Frank Lloyd Wright. Back in New York, she finds a new apartment; it is just a few blocks from the gallery and while more cramped and dismal, suits Stieglitz. She arranges to have it ready to move into when she returns from New Mexico in the autumn. As usual, Stieglitz attempts to delay or derail her trip. But after postponements, she is finally at home again at Ghost Ranch, with Maria, who has already opened the house and made it comfortable.

FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION

1. How would you characterize the O'Keeffe-Stieglitz marriage at this point?
2. O'Keeffe's annual art shows in her husband's gallery have earned her a special prominence in the art world, At the same time, they are also beginning to post special challenges for her. What are those challenges? What is required to meet them? What kind of pressure is involved? How might the requirement for the annual shows affect the nature of an artist's work?
3. In the novel, when Georgia boards the train to leave Wisconsin, she is considering a new idea, an idea she has picked up during her visit to Frank Lloyd Wright's Taliesin. What is it? Do you think it might forecast a possible use for the house at Abiquiu that Maria will begin

building for her after the war? (For more thoughts on this question, see below, *"Tall, white-haired"*)

FOR FURTHER STUDY

The months following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor were among the darkest and most frightening of WWII. Despite the government's attempts to downplay American losses, it quickly became evident that the nation had suffered a nearly unbroken string of military setbacks in the Pacific. By the end of the summer of 1942, many were openly acknowledging that the United States might lose the war. A Gallup poll taken in mid-December showed that the country was united in its determination to fight the war. But the old divisions of class, race, and partisanship remained. People were apprehensive, fearful, and focused anxiously on what was happening. Art, art events, and artists were simply not on the national radar, where it was war, all war, all the time. But artists like O'Keeffe had to carry on, like everyone else in these difficult years.

No longer. For a detailed history of the war's difficult early months, read *The Darkest Year: The American Home Front 1941-1942* by William K. Klingaman. For the story behind the German plan to bomb strategic targets in America, read James P. Duffy's book, *Target America: Hitler's Plan to Attack the United States.*

As if that weren't. Richard Carreño tells the little-known story of the Met's efforts to secure its invaluable holdings at Whitemarsh Hall in "The Met in World War II." Britain had been at war since 1939 and had already moved many of its treasures to abandoned Underground stations in London and country houses in Wales. In France, art pieces removed from the Louvre were clandestinely trucked from one chateau to another to escape the Nazis.

But Georgia enjoys. The description is drawn from Robinson (pp. 572-573).

At Madison Avenue. Drohojowska-Philp details the 1929 establishment of An American Place (pp. 313-314).

This is her annual. The annual show brought critics and crowds to the gallery and supported the continuing (and escalating) sale of O'Keeffe's work. It was a challenge that both prodded her to experimentation and made her fear for the quality of her work and worry that the critics' term "prolific" might be another way of accusing her of "overproducing." Here, it's worth repeating O'Keeffe's remark about the difficulty of creating new work for annual shows (Sabine, L. "Record Price for a Living Artist." 1928), "It is much more difficult to go on now than it was before. Every year I have to carry the thing I do enough further so that people are surprised again."

Yes," she says. Henwar Rodakiewicz had previously been married to Georgia's friends Marie Garland (who owned the H&M Guest Ranch where Georgia stayed in the early 1930s) and Peggy Kiskadden. At this time, he had just been divorced from Kiskadden.

A good-looking man in his early forties, Rodakiewicz and Georgia frequently went out to dinner and the theater together. He is best known for his 1931 documentary film, *Portrait of a Young Man in Three Movements*. He made a later film of O'Keeffe that was less well received. *Land of Enchantment* (1947) marked the breaking point of their relationship, not because it was a bad movie or portrayed her in an unfortunate light, but because he brought a lady friend to the filming with him (Drohojowska-Philp, pp. 430-431). Their warm eighteen-year correspondence (1929-1947) ended with this encounter.

In her post, "Long-lost Georgia O'Keeffe, Alfred Stieglitz Letters Now at the Library" (Library of Congress Blog, March 21, 2019), historian Barbara Blair observes that the friendship may not have been platonic. However, biographer Drohojowska-Philp comments that in the divorce proceedings, Kiskadden cited Rodakiewicz's "preference for male companions" (Drohojowska-Philp, 439), so he may have been bisexual. The O'Keeffe-Rodakiewicz correspondence is available in the Library of Congress Manuscript Room. (I am indebted to Linda M. Grasso for this reference.)

But this show. *Life Magazine's* February 1938 issue carried a photographic essay about O'Keeffe and her work. It was heavily complimentary, but Georgia may have been annoyed to read that her husband was credited with making her the country's "most prosperous and talked-of woman painter." The Dole contract paid for her escape to Hawai'i and ensured that her work would be featured in many popular magazines. The Art Institute of Chicago's offer of a retrospective (scheduled for early 1943) was a significant boost to her career.

Stieglitz's relentless brokering. Laurie Lisle (1997*,* p. 116) quotes the surprising four-hundred-dollar price on the first sale of O'Keeffe's work. MaLin Wilson remarks that Stieglitz was a "thoroughly canny and savvy manager of O'Keeffe's sales," keeping the prices of her work astonishingly high during the Depression and the war years (Wilson, p. 85).

When I ask you. *Correspondence,* pp. 37-38, Letter 11, May 8, 1942.

And Maria—who. Maria writes (*Correspondence,* p. 38, Letter 12, after May 8, 1942) that she wants nothing from Georgia—"not so much as a stick of gum . . . or a handshake." She would like to be kept around as long as Georgia finds her useful. Her letter is clearly the offering of work done for friendship's sake. Georgia, who has just said that she cannot afford to pay her, appears to accept the offer on those terms. There are many possible ways to read this exchange.

When they were girls. The remark was made, according to Robinson (p. 39), when Catherine was explaining why Georgia slept in a room of her own while the three other girls were crowded together. However, O'Keeffe wrote to her friend Ettie Stettheimer (August 6, 1925), about the room she slept in when she was a child: "so small that my brother and I slept together." She adds, intriguingly, "I have forgotten most of the rest of it" (Cowart et al, p. 180). Biographer Hogrefe (p. 15) notes that during the 1930s, she "indicated to her friend Florine Stettheimer [Ettie's sister] that she had been abused by her brother Francis." The phrase "forgotten most of the rest of it" may be a reference to the painful trauma of that experience, which she could have shared with both sisters.

But painting was. *New York Times* reviewer Edward Alden Jewell was not always friendly toward O'Keeffe. His review, "Another O'Keeffe Emerges," appeared in the *New York Times* on March 29, 1933. Today, we would probably call it snarky.

Robinson (p. 495) says that Catherine was devastated by her sister's rage and never painted again. While Ida had a great deal of talent, she could not paint and support herself at the same time. She eventually gave up, too. Robinson's September 4, 2019, *New Yorker* article, "The Rivalry Between Georgia O'Keeffe and Her Sister Ida" gives us a look at some of Ida's work and provides more details of the painful episode.

Tall, white-haired. It is interesting to speculate that Georgia might have gotten the seed of an idea for using her home as an architectural setting for her art and herself as an artist from Frank Lloyd Wright, who used Taliesin, his landmark residence, to publicize his residential architecture and himself as an architect. See "Frank Lloyd Wright Was A Great Architect—But He Was Even Better At Branding," by Diana Budds. Wright turned himself into a public figure with a distinctive personality and immediately recognizable aesthetic style. He used that combination—as well as Taliesin (and later, Taliesin West)—to promote his architecture.

This style of self-promotion is quite similar to the way O'Keeffe began to use both the Ghost Ranch and the Abiquiu houses in the 1950s: as showcases for the iconographic, stylized life that produced her art. She invited photographers to reveal the architectural structures themselves as frames for the art and the artist, as well as for the carefully-crafted lifestyle that had become an art form. In this sense, Maria Chabot, who rebuilt the Abiquiu house from an adobe ruin, served Georgia O'Keeffe better than either of them might have imagined.

Back in New York. The new apartment, which had none of the high-rise status and excitement of the penthouse, was bare of decoration. "My home is simple, but I aim to make it simpler!" Georgia told one visitor (Lisle, 1997, p. 342). Her summer 1943 letter to Claudia about the apartment is quoted in Robinson (p. 605). For more on her minimalism, see Caroline Lord's "Georgia O'Keeffe: The Ultimate Minimalist." Lord quotes O'Keeffe's later remark: "My house in Abiquiú is pretty empty; only what I need is in it. I like walls empty."

But when he. William Klingaman quotes the Navy secretary's September 1942 blunt warning: "We are still losing this war, period. And we should damn well understand it, period." (*The Darkest Year,* p. 253) In that same chapter (Chapter 11, p. 253), Klingaman writes that radio kept even the most remote farmers and ranchers informed about this dire situation. Discouraged as they were, they tried "to do their part—sending their sons off to war, helping children fill their war savings books with stamps, and dutifully planting more soybeans and peanuts because that was what their government asked them to do." Defeating both Germany and Japan was a daunting task.

CHAPTER SIX
MARIA: WOMEN WHO RODE AWAY

TIME AND PLACE

The summers of 1942, 1943, and 1944, in and around O'Keeffe's Ghost Ranch house in the Piedra Lumbre.

WHAT HAPPENS IN THIS CHAPTER

Maria and Georgia find life at the ranch increasingly challenging as the war wears on through the next three summers. In that remote place, it gets more and more difficult to find food that doesn't come out of a can. A garden at the ranch is impossible, so Georgia begins looking for a garden site. Farming is considered critical war work, and Maria is looking for a place where she can grow peaches (peach orchards are a mainstay of the local agriculture). In their search, Georgia points out the ruined Chavez hacienda in Abiquiu, which has a large garden area but belongs to the Diocese and isn't for sale.

March, 1943, finds Maria with Georgia in Chicago for Georgia's retrospective exhibit at the Art Institute of Chicago. In March, 1944, she visits Georgia and Stieglitz in New York. At the ranch, there is the usual summer company—too much company, Maria thinks. And now, there are the men, Georgia's younger male friends, especially Maurice, with whom O'Keeffe is conspicuously flirtatious. The situation becomes more and more uncomfortable, and in October, 1944, after four years together, the two women decide to call it quits. Maria won't join Georgia at Ghost Ranch in 1945. Changing Woman has a different plan for her. It has to do with peaches.

FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION

1. How does the relationship between Maria and Georgia change over this period? Why? What do you think Georgia means when she tells Maria that she isn't the kind of person Georgia would choose for a friend? Who *are* Georgia's friends? What do they seem to have in common with her?

2. Both Maria and Georgia are temperamentally volatile. What differences do you see in the way they deal with their anger? What problems do their tempers cause, both for themselves and others?
3. Do you think Maria is justified in her suspicions about Georgia's invitation to Maurice? She says she's not jealous of Georgia's "young men," but what *is* she jealous of? What's going on here? Can you imagine yourself in a similar situation? How would you have handled it?
4. Gardening became an obsession for both Maria and Georgia, but for different reasons. What are they? How does the war affect the food supply on the home front? Do you or those in your family have any recollections of those challenging years?
5. Both women were deeply interested in the "old hacienda" in Abiquiu. How were their interests in the house similar? How were they different?

FOR FURTHER STUDY

In this chapter, we see Maria and Georgia testing their hopes and desires against the realities of landscape and community. You might want to look a little deeper into this difficult effort and the abrasions it created in their relationship. If you have access to the published *Correspondence,* Maria's active participation in negotiations for the Abiquiu house (not previously known to biographers) are worth more exploration. As well, the letters themselves have not been studied. The many small revelations there add up to a fascinating story of a fraying friendship. The author's commentary in the section below reflects her reading of the letters.

And nothing there. Maria's apologies for her behavior are a continuing feature of her letters to Georgia, which are increasingly introspective and soul-searching, very like a personal journal. Her letters reveal a young woman who is deeply aware of her emotional state and feels compelled to share what's in her mind and her heart. From the *Correspondence,* here are three examples of her habit of apologizing:

- When [I] think of that last [temper tantrum I] had I [wanted] to hide my head on your [shoulder and] beg [your forgiveness] (*Correspondence,* Letter 23, p. 46, December 3, 1942). *The brackets indicate illegible or reconstructed words or phrases in this damaged letter.*
- I know that I have been a trial to you, perhaps too great a trial—there have been so many bitter things (Letter 99*,* p. 136, November 15, 1943).

- This is to beg your pardon for what I wrote yesterday. I sent you some mocking-bird feathers today—for that (Letter 7*,* p. 162, January 13, 1944).

Maria uses her letters to both Georgia and to Dorothy Stewart as a way of exploring who she is and how she feels at any given point. Georgia's letters to Maria, on the other hand, are rarely introspective. Linda M. Grasso provides an excellent close reading of the Chabot-O'Keeffe letters in "Reading Published Letter Collections as Literary Texts: *Maria Chabot—Georgia O'Keeffe Correspondence*, *1941–1949* as a Case Study." *Legacy: A Journal of American Women Writers*. 25. 2 (Fall 2008). pp. 239-250.

Georgia's furies. All of Georgia's biographers comment on her angry eruptions. Stieglitz's niece vividly recalls the occasion when she was introduced to Georgia. A child of not-quite-three, she curtseyed, offered her hand, and said, "How do you do, Aunt Georgia?" Her reward: a "stinging slap and a blazing 'Don't ever call me Aunt!'" (Lowe, Sue. *Stieglitz: A Memoir/Biography*. p. 225). "Georgia's rage was monumental and intense," Robinson writes, describing O'Keeffe's reaction to her sister's artistic efforts (p. 495). Benita Eisler remarks, "Everyone had a theory to account for Georgia's uncontrolled savagery—like a sawed-off shotgun" (pp. 484-485). Jeffrey Hogrefe comments that O'Keeffe was known for her "foul temper and unpredictable moods," confronting "those who opposed her with a blast of fury . . . Juan Hamilton called it 'the snakebite'" (p. 142). He adds, "O'Keeffe's temper would soon become as well known as the flowers and bones in her paintings" (Hogrefe, p. 124). Hamilton's reference to O'Keeffe's temper as "the snakebite" might explain her inscription on the back of a painting entitled "A Day with Juan": "For Juan with RattleSnakes and Love and appreciation. Georgia, July 27-1977." (This is one of a series of paintings O'Keeffe produced with a studio assistant. See Chapter Twelve, key: ***One of these***.)

Biographer Laurie Lisle joins Stieglitz's niece in reporting that she personally felt the brunt of O'Keeffe's anger. In her 2021 memoir, *Word for Word: A Writer's Life*, Lisle says that in May 1977, she and O'Keeffe had what she thought was a friendly telephone conversation. Georgia had even gone so far as to say that Lisle was "welcome" to whatever information she could get from interviews with friends and relatives. But when Lisle appeared at the ranch, it was another story. O'Keeffe "exploded in anger," denying that she had given Lisle permission to talk to anyone about her. Lisle was "stunned and appalled," in large part because the encounter was so profoundly disillusioning. Her description of her feelings helps us to understand how others may have reacted to O'Keeffe's out-of-control anger:

> Her rage made me feel numb . . . Underneath, however, the rebuff was devastating because she represented to me an idealized and inspiring other mother, an older woman with the courage to live as herself in a man's world—an Artemis-like figure strong enough to express and

> defend herself. It was how I wanted to be, too. Now she had tried to stop and smash what I was trying to do out of pure admiration for her (Lisle, 2021, pp. 165-166).

The artist's temper apparently worsened when she began losing her sight, could no longer work at her easel, and had to depend on caregivers. Carol Merrill spent six years as a weekend caregiver for O'Keeffe. In *Weekends With O'Keeffe,* a collection of contemporaneous entries, she frequently remarks on the artist's temper: "Miss O'Keeffe's tantrums came to a head today" (p. 94). "She goes into a rage if anyone pampers her" (p. 147). And "I called Juan last night for a little moral support to try to deal with her negative energy. His advice was to stand aside when the shit flies" (p. 98).

And I would come. Maria would have been witness to many of Georgia's angry eruptions but (for obvious reasons) mentions only a few in her letters to the artist. The episode involving Star, the workman mentioned here, is described in *Correspondence,* p. 349, Letter 46, April 15, 1946.

But that was in the future. The recipe for whole wheat bread in *A Painter's Kitchen: Recipes from the Kitchen of Georgia O'Keeffe* may be similar to the one Maria used when she baked for Georgia. Margaret Wood, who compiled the cookbook, reports that the flour was "always ground with Miss O'Keeffe's small mill in the pantry" (p. 76). "Quite often this bread was served at breakfast, toasted in her old-fashioned toaster with center heating coils and two hinged metal sides with open grillwork." At the time, Adelle Davis' recipe for granola was an entirely new and unfamiliar thing. There are several Davis books in O'Keeffe's library.

Back in 1941. See Robinson (p. 397) for the 1927 breast surgery, a lumpectomy. The nervous breakdown (O'Keeffe was hospitalized for two months in 1933) is described in varying detail in almost all the biographies. Central to all of the descriptions is Stieglitz' exclusion from her hospital room. In Drohojowska-Philp, see pp. 345-350.

So both Georgia. Having given up the search for garden property (at least for the moment), Maria writes about planting vegetables in the corral in *Correspondence,* p. 114, Letter 70, April 18, 1943. For a realistic look at the Victory Garden, see Jennifer Steinhauer's "Victory Gardens Were More About Solidarity Than Survival," *The New York Times,* July 15, 2020.

And so I began. Maria's idea of becoming an orchardist may have dated back to her childhood when she and her family visited relatives in nearby Fredericksburg, Texas, which is widely known for its peaches. The relatives owned an orchard.

The idea had another. The Library of Congress has a print of the patronizing poster, "Good work, sister."

The jingles and posters. It may be difficult for us, living outside the context of World War II, to understand Maria's urgent desire to turn farmer. Producing food for the home-front citizens had become a matter of national emergency, and the government was pulling out all the stops in an effort to encourage agricultural production. The USDA's Crop Corps was one such effort, functioning on a large scale as the Victory Gardens functioned in citizens' backyards. The Crop Corps program also enlisted the help of Hollywood, wrapping farm work in "the flag of wartime patriotism," as Daniel B. Moskowitz puts it in "The Crop Corps: How Agriculture Helped Win the War" ("The History Net," February 20, 2017).

I almost said yes. Dorothy Stewart was the intermediary here. She volunteered (in a letter to Maria dated January 16, 1945) to talk to her friend Dorothy McKibben about a position at Los Alamos for Maria. Maria, however, had recently learned that Mary Wheelwright intended to bequeath Los Luceros to her and did not pursue the Los Alamos opportunity. For more about McKibben (known as the "first lady of Los Alamos") and her role as gatekeeper for the Manhattan Project, see *109 East Palace: Robert Oppenheimer and the Secret City of Los Alamos* by Jennet Conant.

The more Georgia and I. Discussions of these possibilities occupied the two women for months and were the subject of the more than fifty letters exchanged during March and April, 1943, while Maria was in New Mexico looking for possible properties. At this time and over the next eighteen months, the women began to think more and more favorably about the Abiquiu property. Not only did it have a large garden area, but it would be habitable year-round. Ghost Ranch was inaccessible in winter.

We didn't stop. The ruined Chavez hacienda that so fascinated Georgia and Maria is the subject of a full chapter in the charming 1956 memoir of Cleofas M. Jaramillo, who visited it almost sixty years earlier. The occasion was the wedding of a Chavez cousin in Abiquiu. Jaramillo describes her first view of the impressive house, recalling the very same door that so attracted Georgia:

> The front *saguan* was closed by one of those rare, double high doors that had a small door cut out in one of the leaves of the larger one. These doors were built for safety against attacks of the Indians. The large door was kept closed and only the small one used. Although there was not such danger now, the custom was still adhered to for privacy (*Romance of a Little Village Girl,* p. 59).

The history of the Abiquiu house, summarized in the National Historic Landmark Nomination (pp. 7-9), is worth studying. It provides the context for the villagers' view of the most important house in their community.

I was drawn. **The charming booklet, "**Adobe Notes or How to Keep the Weather Out With Just Plain Mud" by Dorothy Stewart and Kate Chapman, is reprinted in Catherine Colby's *Kate Chapman: Adobe Builder in 1930s Santa Fe*, pp. 57-77.

But what I learned. Maria discussed Georgia's offer of land in an April 12, 1943, letter to Dorothy Stewart, in which she also mentions the offer of an eleven-acre plot by Catherine Ferrally, a friend of both Maria's and Dorothy's. Several years later, Ferrally (a real estate broker) would persuade a new archbishop that it would be a good idea to sell the Abiquiu house to O'Keeffe. Chabot's letters to Stewart during this period have a very different tone and are much more revealing than her letters to O'Keeffe.

We also drove. For the life that Beck James fashioned in Taos after her divorce from Paul Strand, see *Foursome* by Carolyn Burke. O'Keeffe supported James' art, which was not competitive with hers, as her sisters' art had been.

In early October. The story about Pritzlaff's party is told by most of the biographers, with varying detail. Drohojowska-Philp's version appears on p. 398. Lynes says that the painting Georgia dedicated to Maria and hung in her 1943 exhibition was later destroyed (*Correspondence,* p. 95, Letter 50, April 6, 1943, n, 46).

Richard Pritzlaff died in 1998. His 3,200-acre New Mexico ranch now belongs to the Biophilia Foundation. After the 2022 Hermit's Peak/Calf Canyon fires, it serves as a demonstration project for sustainable water management and forest restoration.

A personal note from Susan Albert: my husband and I owned property about fifteen miles from the Pritzlaff ranch. As I drove past or hiked in that area, I enjoyed imagining Maria and Georgia visiting there, as they did several times in the early 1940s, when Pritzlaff offered Maria the position of ranch manager. In fact, he offered her a job several times. Georgia replied teasingly when Maria told her about the first offer: "Did Richard want a hired man—a cook—a housemaid, or a stenographer or a bed fellow—of course the only way he could get them all in one would be to marry you" (*Correspondence,* pp. 25-26, Letter 35, December 14, 1941).

That fall, O'Keeffe. Georgia's thank you appears in *Correspondence,* p. 45, Letter 21, November 30, 1942, which she signs "Sincerely and fondly." The instruction about wiring the mailbox appears in Letter 28, p. 21, December 1, 1941.

I got there just. Maria described her week-long trip in detail and enclosed a clipping of Odenheimer's review in a lively, informative letter to Dorothy Stewart (Stewart Correspondence, Letter 200, February 26, 1943).

When I got back. Frederick retired from the diplomatic service after a rather checkered career. His biography can be found in The Handbook of Texas Online.

In New York. Georgia makes the remark about drying chiles in *Correspondence,* p. 73, Letter 22, February 24, 1943.

The old hacienda. The parish priest was the Reverend William Bickhaus, a German immigrant, as was Martin Bode, the owner of Abiquiu's general store. Bickhaus came to the El Rito Parish in 1932 and remained until 1946. He was largely responsible for the decision to build the church at Abiquiu in 1937. He apparently had his own plans for the Chavez hacienda—a parish house, perhaps, or a school—and was not in favor of selling to a famous artist from New York. Details of Bickhaus' departure from the parish (at the same time that construction began on the hacienda) do not seem to be available.

That's when I began. Over the next decade, working closely with the Genízaros and the Pueblo Indians at Los Luceros and on the construction of the Abiquiu house, Maria learned just how difficult it was to be accepted into the closed communities. The local people had been mistreated by so many Anglos in so many ways and for so long that their suspicions were deep-seated and well-founded. It was an important realization for her and would help make her more realistic about the nature of the communities there. David L. Caffey's masterful *Chasing the Santa Fe Ring: Power and Privilege in Territorial New Mexico* tells the ugly story of the speculators who changed the pattern of land ownership in New Mexico for their own enrichment, cheating the native owners and leaving them landless. Also helpful: William deBuys' *Enchantment and Exploitation: The Life and Hard Times of a New Mexico Mountain Range.* Both books describe the complex, multi-layered historical, social, and environmental context within which Maria and Georgia sought to establish themselves as property owners, with very different (and unexplored) assumptions about the whys and hows of their stewardship of this ancient land.

I was discouraged. For Georgia's remark about worms and wildlife, see *Correspondence,* p. 97, Letter 52, April 7, 1943. Between March 1 and April 30 that year, the women exchanged fifty-six letters, primarily focused on finding land on which Maria could produce food for Georgia's table and realize her aim of cultivating an orchard. Both were obsessed with the task, each with her own private reasons for spurring on the other.

An interesting thing. Arthur Pack tells about the visitors from Los Alamos in his memoir, *We Called It Ghost Ranch,* in a chapter entitled "A Bomb Called Trinity" (pp. 77-82).

When we got back. The trip is detailed in Maria's long letter to Stieglitz, deliciously full of details of the experience. It is an example of the kind of lively, vivid writing Maria can do when she knows her reader well and writes specifically to capture that reader's attention. She closes with this: "At the end of my third year with her again I say how lucky I am to live in the midst of what she is seeing and doing . . . I tell it to you because you are the only one who really can know what I mean" (*Correspondence,* p. 125, Letter 86, October 20, 1943). Perhaps Maria felt herself drawn to Stieglitz because they both cared for the same woman. This might have been one reason why she was so deeply offended when O'Keeffe later behaved in a way that seemed to her to be a betrayal—the relationship with Maurice Grosser, for instance.

When Georgia got back. The details of O'Keeffe's many difficulties with household help are recorded in her letters of November and December, 1943, (*Correspondence,* pp. 131-149). She continues to find them all "unsuitable."

Meanwhile, her New York. Georgia's accounts of her activities in her chatty letters to Maria provide the best record we have of her active social life in the city. They also reveal that the artist viewed Maria not as someone who would share her pleasure in artistic activities—like her reading of Ananda Coomaraswamy 's book, *Why Exhibit Works of Art?,* a copy of which she sent to Maria, telling her not to put off reading it for it would "add to" her life. See especially *Correspondence,* pp. 149-150, Letter 117, December 16, 1943 (about *Othello*), and Letter 100, p. 136, November 16, 1943, where she mentions the offer (the equivalent of $170,000 today) for "Black Iris."

But even while Georgia busies herself in New York, she is thinking of the new life ahead of her in New Mexico. She writes to Martin Bode about buying the Abiquiu ruin (Letter 2, p. 158, January 2, 1944). She also invites Maria to spend the summer with her again but cautions that she intends to manage things at the ranch "my way" (Letter 8, p. 164, January 18, 1944). What she has in mind will become clearer as her intentions emerge in the next few months.

But it seemed. Maria reports her conversations with Santa Fe realtor Katherine Ferrally in *Correspondence,* p. 138, Letter 102, November 20, 1943, and Letter 103, pp. 138-139, November 21, 1943. In Letter 103, Maria conveys Ferrally's suggestion that Georgia offer a thousand dollars cash for the house, along with a gift of three thousand dollars that the new archbishop, Archbishop Edwin Byrne, can use to fund an Abiquiu health clinic or parish house. Ferrally also suggests that Georgia make a special point of her hope to restore the place as a typical Spanish Colonial house, something that Maria is especially interested in, given her friendship with Kate Chapman and other Santa Fe women adobe-builders. Ferrally thought that this plan might win over the archbishop. Her negotiation with Byrne is not described in the letters but may have been a deciding factor in the diocese's long uncertainty over what to do with the Chavez house.

Most of the visitors. O'Keeffe's confidence in the extraordinary power she and Stieglitz wielded in the New York art world is apparent in a remarkable sentence she wrote for the cover of the exhibition catalogue of New Mexico painter Cady Wells' first New York show (1944): "I am glad you are showing Cady's paintings at the same time that Stieglitz is showing mine because we are the two best painters working in our part of the country." (Quoted by Lois Rudnick in her article "'Under the Skin' of New Mexico: The Art of Cady Wells," *Elpalacio*, Winter 2013, pp. 49-51.

All these men. The evidence is scattered but persuasive. O'Keeffe biographer Hunter Drohojowska-Philp documents her subject's pre-Stieglitz romantic life in Chapters Seven and Eight of *In Full Bloom* and her relationship with Paul Strand in Chapter Ten. Stieglitz photographically documented her premarital affair with him. Roxana Robinson writes of O'Keeffe's 1929 dalliance with Tony Luhan (pp. 297-307); she also writes of the 1933 Jean Toomer affair (pp. 350-351), as does Hogrefe (pp. 170-171).

Jeffrey Hogrefe attributes the artist's often flagrant flirtations to a recurring pattern of repressed sexual and emotional energy. "A relative [of O'Keeffe] recalled that she flirted openly with him," he writes. "The daughter of a friend observed that when she knew her in the 1950s, 'Georgia was a sexpot.'" Hogrefe adds that Freud would have diagnosed this as "sexual hysteria" (p. 72). Biographer Benita Eisler, reading Georgia's letters to a Stieglitz nephew, finds them "intimate and confiding, with bursts of elephantine flirtatiousness" (p. 485). Eisler observes that O'Keeffe was "open about her own helpless attraction" to a certain type of reckless, unruly young man and cites Marjorie Toomer's concern about Georgia's decade-long involvement with a young Abiquiu male (Jackie Suazo) who had been jailed three times, at least once for assault, battery, and rape. "I call him my darling," Georgia wrote to Anita Pollitzer, and drove back and forth to Albuquerque to try to get him released from prison (Eisler, p. 485).

On Georgia's fondness for young men, Roxana Robinson observes (pp. 706-707) that "O'Keeffe had often fallen in a kind of love with young men, and younger men had figured importantly in her life." She mentions Ted Reid (Texas, 1917) and Paul Strand (1917-1918), both of whom were slightly younger than O'Keeffe; as well as the substantially younger Cady Wells, Jackie Suazo, and William Einstein, whom the artist invited, alone, to the ranch in 1940. We might also include the photographer Eliot Porter, Magnus (Mike) Harding, and Henwar Rodakiewicz. (Georgia left bequests to the two latter men in her late-1940s will.) Robinson adds that a photographer friend remembered Georgia's very evident attraction to his young assistant. This behavior was so obvious that a visiting journalist once wrote that when she first met the artist at Abiquiu, O'Keeffe was "swooning over her new young gardener" (Lynne Bundeson, "The Memoir of a Legendary Friendship: *A Woman on Paper*," *Los Angeles Times,* Sept. 18, 1988). And of course, there is Juan Hamilton, much younger, much later.

The story about the torn photo was told to Drohojowska-Philp by Adams' widow, Virginia, and appears in *Full Bloom* (p. 372 and in note 11). "When Cox's wife saw the photograph of O'Keeffe's suggestive glance, she flew into a jealous rage and tore the photograph to pieces." You can view Ansel Adams' famous (or infamous) image on the O'Keeffe Museum site.

Since Georgia was. The neighbor's report comes from Nancy Hopkins Reily, whose family purchased land near Abiquiu and whom O'Keeffe visited on several occasions. "Adding to Georgia's enjoyment of our family," Reily writes, "was her flirting with Uncle Winfield, a young forty-two-year-old man full of energy and spirit. Georgia's reputation for liking men better than certain types of women was evident" (*Georgia O'Keeffe, A Private Friendship, Part II: Walking the Abiquiu and Ghost Ranch Land,* loc. 350)

But it wasn't always. Candelario's fictional remark is based on Hogrefe's candid reports of O'Keeffe's behavior in similar situations. He also quotes Phoebe Pack's observation that "[Georgia] could be vindictive. Nothing she could say could be bad enough if she disliked a person" (p. 157).

She also charged. The argument happened in early July, 1944. Georgia related the incident to Stieglitz in a letter of July 8, writing that Maria had "owned up" that she was "jealous" because Maurice could do anything she could do. This made her "hate him." This was no doubt one aspect of the complicated dynamic at work here, but by all means not the only one. It's possible, for instance, that Georgia portrays the situation in this way in order to deflect whatever contradictory description Maria might write in a letter to her husband. Georgia mentions Maurice a dozen or so times in this sequence of letters to Stieglitz and at one point offers an extended description of a motorcycle ride. Was she trying to make her husband jealous? If so, she certainly had good cause, given his long and public affair with Dorothy Norman. Or perhaps she was attempting to demonstrate that there was nothing to see here, nothing at all to see.

And worse, it might. People who observed Maria's relationship to Georgia in those years understood that Maria—if only because she was necessary to Georgia's comfortable life at the ranch—had a special kind of authority with the artist. A friend (perhaps Richard Pritzlaff) remarked to Hogrefe that Maria was the only person who could "boss Georgia around." Hogrefe says that the relationship between the two women was "as deep as any relationship the artist would ever have during her lifetime" (p. 295). This might have been as painful as it was rewarding for Georgia, who once wrote to her friend Paul Strand that she felt "like a sort of slave when I am liking any one very much" (quoted in Robinson, p. 235). If that "liking" also involved dependency (as it did with Stieglitz in one way and Maria in others), Georgia must have been deeply conflicted.

But because she. We know about this conversation because Maria documents it in a letter to Georgia: "I remember our last [intense conversation] when you told me honestly that I [was not the] type you would have as a friend, could have; [and that] was apparent to you the first day we met at Mary Wheelwright's" (*Correspondence,* pp. 161-162, Letter 6, January 12, 1944). The check for $360 (for six months' work) is documented in Letter 4, January 6, 1944, pp. 159-160.

I had heard her. O'Keeffe made the remark about drawing Arthur Pack's blood in a letter to Cady Wells, quoted in Drohojowska-Philp, p. 387. Benita Eisler comments that "the fact that O'Keeffe was "frequently and gratuitously cruel is documented by all those who knew her" (p. 398). One of the biographer's interviewees related that in 1949, O'Keefe encountered a woman she hadn't seen for a while and blurted, "You've gotten so fat and old-looking. You used to be such a pretty girl" (Eisler p. 484). Hogrefe spoke to someone who remarked that when he thought of Georgia, he saw a "block of wood. She had a terrific talent along one mind, but with people . . . she just walked right past them. She was very insensitive to other people" (Hogrefe, p. 150).

And so I apologized. Maria's late 1944 and early 1945 letters are exaggeratedly contrite, to the point where they seem to belong to the adopted persona of the "naughty child" or "bad girl" who has to apologize frequently to the "good mother" for her "bad behavior." This may be a persona that Maria has constructed as a response to Georgia's gaslighting, making Maria feel that she is entirely at fault for their disagreements. (Yes, women can gaslight, too.) It seems clear that the dynamics of this situation were becoming increasingly unhealthy and damaging, for both of them. But it is also clear that the responsibility for this belongs to both the older and the younger women, and not to Maria alone (as the editor of the *Correspondence* would have us believe). There are clearly power issues at work here.

While I attempted. Maria relates the story of her ten-day trip to New York in a four-page single-spaced typewritten letter to Dorothy Stewart dated March 22, 1943. Georgia may have seen her relationship with Maria as increasing in value because of Maria's friendship with Mary Wheelwright and Mary's friend, the wealthy and socially influential Alice Brayton, known for her philanthropic interests as well as for the family art collection at Brayton Hall. See Gloria Schmidt's blog, *Portsmouth History Notes*, "Portsmouth Women: Alice Brayton and Green Animals."

But the unexpectedly. The phrase "It comforts me to know you are with her" is quoted from Stieglitz's letter to Maria (*Correspondence,* p. 193, Letter 49, April 26, 1944). Maria's close relationship with Stieglitz—not something expected (or tolerated) of an employee—may have been the source of some friction between Georgia and Maria. That is, Stieglitz was known to be more than flirtatious with younger women. Georgia's sometimes spiteful comments about Maria's "tantrums" in the letters she wrote to her husband in these months should be viewed with this possibility in mind.

I thought of all. Stieglitz's remark, "healthy & health-giving," appears in *Correspondence,* p. 249, Letter 20, February 19, 1945. His claim of "true" friendship is on p. 186, Letter 38, April 2, 1944. He had none of Georgia's difficulty claiming Maria as a friend. It must have gratified Maria deeply.

Since I wasn't tending. The motorcycle was a 1936 Knucklehead, so called because the engine looked like a clenched fist. If you could find one in good condition today, it might be worth as much as $100,000. D.H. Lawrence wrote "The Woman who Rode Away" in New Mexico during the summer of 1924; it was first published in *The Dial* in two installments in 1925. The photo began receiving attention when it appeared on a poster for the seminar "Women Who Rode Away: New Lives in the American Southwest," sponsored by Recursos de Santa Fe, July 1992.

Maria Chabot. Georgia O'Keeffe Hitching a Ride to Abiquiu with Maurice Grosser, 1944. Gelatin silver print. Maria Chabot Archive. Georgia O'Keeffe Museum. Gift of Maria Chabot. © Georgia O'Keeffe Museum. [RC.2001.2.139b]

The Red Cross backed. Maria mentions her request to Dr. Light, the retiring doctor, in *Correspondence,* p. 205, Letter 67, October 24, 1944. There is no record of a response. The clinic was funded and operational by March 1946, when Maria writes Georgia that the clinic is the only Red Cross postwar project in the region (Letter 33, March 21, 1946, p. 337). An important contribution to the health and welfare of the villagers, it might have been many more years in the making if it had not been for Maria's energy, her organizational skills, and her friendship with Stoll and Marriott, both of whom were in a position to help move the project forward. Father Bickhaus did not support the Red Cross project, since any clinic not funded and controlled by the Church would provide information on birth control.

Maurice was still. Henwar's string of marriages has been slightly simplified for the novel. Georgia originally met him in the early 1930s. At the time, he was married to

Marie Garland and living at Marie's H&M Ranch near Alcalde, on the Rio Grande River, where Georgia stayed for several summers. Garland herself was an interesting figure. A very wealthy Bostonian, she was married seven time (one of her husbands was a Polish count) and is said to have been murdered by a jealous lover at age seventy-five.

Eliot Porter came too. Nancy Newhall told the story about the World's Fair trip to biographer Laurie Lisle (1997, pp. 323-324). Phoebe Pack had a similar story for Jeffrey Hogrefe. According to Pack, in the summer of 1937, Georgia organized a camping trip to Indian country with three young men: Ansel Adams, Orville Cox, and David McAlpin. McAlpin made the mistake of inviting a woman friend without consulting the artist. Phoebe, who witnessed what happened next, told Hogrefe that Georgia "ripped him up one side and down the other." "And I don't like her," Georgia added, loudly enough for all to hear. "She has no brains" (Hogrefe, p. 208).

We'd been at the ranch. Maria's letter to Stieglitz can be found in *Correspondence* (Letter 53, July 6, 1944, p. 195). Maria's letter to Dorothy (Stewart Correspondence, Letter 218, July 4, 1944) makes it clear that she was prepared to leave the ranch (and leave Georgia to manage the crowd by herself) if the situation did not improve.

This was not an isolated situation. Hogrefe reports an instance in the 1950s when O'Keeffe ordered Dorothy Fredericks, another household helper, to cook for yet another large group without notice. Fredericks told the biographer that she had "idolized" O'Keeffe as her "champion," but she turned in her resignation anyway (Hogrefe, p. 232).

Was I disappointed? Marriott wrote about her life in the adobe that she and her housemate renovated and shared in a charming memoir called *The Valley Below* (University of Oklahoma Press, 1949)—very worth reading. Marriott adopted one of O'Keeffe's Ghost Ranch Siamese cats (originally provided by Richard Pritzlaff). "[The cat] had once belonged to a famous painter," Marriott writes, "who had given her away at the first opportunity and sucker that happened along" (Marriott, p. 31). Her chapter, "The Royal Cats of Siam" is a delightful account of living with a clan of Siamese cats. The whole memoir offers a glimpse into what postwar life was like at the foot of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains.

Georgia and I also agreed. Maria's remark about Maurice, "as civilized as they come," appears in a letter to Dorothy (Stewart Correspondence, Letter 217, June 29, 1944. Binder 137, Maria Chabot writing on Dorothy Stewart, 1939-1956. Maria Chabot Papers, 4. Georgia O'Keeffe Museum).

LOS LUCEROS

> Río Arriba is a league north of the mission and up the same plain. It consists of a number of ranches like those mentioned before. These settlers live by the help of the afore-mentioned river, with whose waters they make fruitful the very fertile lands that the meadows of that river offer. As such they produce copious harvests. There are three or four fruit orchards of apples, peaches and apricots.
>
> — Fray Francisco Atanasio Dominguez, 1776

Over the centuries, the land known as Los Luceros has played an important role in the history of New Mexico. It is now one of the state's most famous (and most beautiful) living museums. If you're planning a trip to the Southwest, you'll want to include this lovely place, which Maria Chabot called home for more than a decade, and into which she invested her love of the land and her care for the people it traditionally supported. Here is some background reading that helped me piece together the Los Luceros story.

For Your Consideration

1. Mary Cabot Wheelwright and Georgia O'Keeffe have some interesting and important things in common. What are they? What are their differences? How is that reflected in the way they care for Los Luceros?
2. Do you know something of the pre-settlement history of the land where you live? What was it like before White people came? Did any one person leave an imprint on the place?

Explore Online

1. Make a virtual visit to Los Luceros, now a New Mexico Historical Site.
2. View VisitNewMexico's four-minute film, "Los Luceros Hacienda." Historical photographs of the Casa Grande and its interiors, its landscape, and its people. Maria lived in the house you see at 0:51 and 2:49.
3. Read the nomination of Los Luceros for the National Register of Historic Places. Lots of information about the original land grant and subsequent ownership, as well as architectural plans of the buildings.

Background Reading

Armstrong, Liatrice A. *Mary Wheelwright: Her Book*. Wheelwright Museum of the American Indian, 2016. The story of Mary Cabot Wheelwright's early life in a wealthy Boston family; her discovery of the Southwest and her fascination with Native American spirituality; her relationships with friends, artists, and activists; and her founding of the Wheelwright Museum of the American Indian.

Markesteyn, Marie, Candace Walsh. "The Accidental Angel," in *El Palacio: Art, History, and Culture of the American Southwest, Fall, 2017*. Intimate personal recollections of Los Luceros by a woman who lived there in the 1980s—including a couple of ghost stories.

Miller, Michael. "The Secret Sanctuary," in *El Palacio: Art, History, and Culture of the American Southwest,* Fall, 2017. A capsule review of the history of Los Luceros from the time of the Tewa to the current day.

Wallis, Michael. *Los Luceros: New Mexico's Morning Star.* Museum of New Mexico Press, 2018. The multi-century story of Los Luceros in the larger context of Northern New Mexico history. Chapters on the Tewa, the Entrada and the Martíns, Wheelwright and Chabot, and the preservation efforts that led to the State of New Mexico's acquisition of the property, to be managed by New Mexico Historic Sites as a living museum.

CHAPTER SEVEN
MARIA: THE GIFT

TIME AND PLACE

October 1944 - June 1945, at Los Luceros, a large, historic ranch on the Rio Grande River

WHAT HAPPENS IN THIS CHAPTER

Mary Cabot Wheelwright, wealthy Easterner, owner of and part-time resident at Los Luceros, tells Maria that she has bequeathed the estate to her and invites her to move there. Maria—who has already had enough experience with Mary to know how difficult it is to work with her—is at first uncertain but finally decides to accept. Having spent the winter in San Antonio, she returns to Los Luceros in the early spring and begins work in the famous orchards there.

FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION

1. Maria spends a lot of time weighing the pros and cons of Mary's offer. How would you feel if you had just left a long-term relationship/employment and someone offered you a situation that seemed many times better? Would you trust your good fortune or be concerned that there was a hidden catch? How would you go about deciding what to do?
2. How does Georgia seem to feel about Mary's gift to Maria? Do you think she might be concerned for Maria's welfare? Jealous of her good fortune? Resentful of Mary's ability to offer such a generous opportunity? Georgia reports that Mary believes that she (Georgia) "used" Maria. Do you agree with Mary?
3. Georgia's encounter with William Zorach is revealing, as is Maria's response. What does Maria mean when she says that it was not Zorach whom Georgia whipped? Do you agree with her?
4. What does Maria learn from Becky James about Georgia and Maurice Grosser? Have you ever been disappointed in someone you respected

or even revered? How did it change your feelings about the person? How did you handle the situation? How might you handle it differently now, after time has gone by?

FOR FURTHER STUDY

If you have access to the *Correspondence,* you might read Maria's letters to Georgia during the early months of 1945, when she is debating whether to accept Mary Wheelwright's gift, which comes with a cat's-cradle of strings attached, explicit and implicit. There were a great many issues for her to weigh when it came to a firm decision. No surprise that she was a bit overwhelmed!

Georgia left in the middle. Michael Wallis relates the opening episode of Maria's fifteen-year management of the estate in his deeply researched and beautifully illustrated history of Los Luceros. (Wallis, pp. 131-133). Leatrice Armstrong gives it a briefer telling in her weighty biography of Wheelwright (Armstrong, pp. 96-111).

But Lucy had died. Quoted in Armstrong, pp. 104-105.

O'Keeffe, of course. On first hearing the news, Georgia congratulates Maria on her good fortune (*Correspondence,* p. 201, Letter 62, October 17, 1944). Interestingly, throughout that winter Georgia and Mary Wheelwright meet frequently in New York, sharing meals and conversation. And soon enough, Georgia (now sounding a bit jealous of the wealthy Wheelwright's desire to provide so handsomely for the young woman who has just left her employ) cautions Maria about Wheelwright's motives, and especially about her determination to turn her into a lady. Wheelwright forthrightly told O'Keeffe that the artist has "used" Maria, and inadvertently reveals that she is guiltily aware of this herself (p. 237, Letter 7, January 15, 1945). In the same letter, she is scathingly critical of Wheelwright as a patron of the arts: "My God—I've never before had a kind of violent feeling as I have now—against this sort of person out about the town absorbing culture like a sponge."

In one letter. Georgia tells this tale in *Correspondence,* p. 254, Letter 26, March 3, 1945, from which the quote is taken. Maria's astringent reply: p. 256, Letter 28, March 6, 1945. Maria now has other work to do and another future to imagine. She is no longer obligated to and dependent on Georgia and is increasingly free to say what she thinks. Her remark, "It was not Zorach that you whipped," is an example of the insightful (and revealing) personal observations that begin to occur in the letters about this time.

I went to Los Luceros. Maria mentions the two hundred pear trees in a late 1945 letter (*Correspondence,* pp. 302-303, Letter 91, December 31, 1945). For the next three or four years, when she orders orchard and garden plants for Los Luceros, she also orders for Georgia's Abiquiu property as well.

For instance, who. Maria's adventure with Joe is described in *Correspondence,* p. 264, Letter 38, March 28, 1945.

The* acequia*, too. Some of the work is described in *Correspondence,* p. 274, Letter 49, April 10, 1945.

But I couldn't. Maria took seriously her commitment to the land and enjoyed the kind of physical work she describes here and documents in her letters during the spring and summer of 1945 and following years. These provide an interesting overview (and plenty of detail) about the kind of work that needed to be done to make the estate successful. But busy as she is at Los Luceros, she is also planning to pick up Flora and one or two other workers and take them to clean Georgia's Ghost Ranch house, for which she has also purchased a grease trap and arranged its installation (p. 274, Letter 50, April 11, 1945).

But Mary gave me. The term "peony world" was used by both women to describe their discomfort with a life that was too genteel and comfortable. Maria writes (*Correspondence* p. 209, Letter 72, November 1-2, 1944) that she would just like to walk away "from all of the peony world." It was an impulse Georgia shared as well. She uses the term "real peony living" to describe a visit with her wealthy sister Anita (pp. 212-213, Letter 77, November 6, 1944). At the time, Anita and Robert Young were living in the palatial Tudor Revival home on the beachfront estate of Fairholme in Newport, Rhode Island. The property sold in 2015 for $16 million. Georgia wrote her letter on stationery with the Fairholme letterhead.

And who was there. The nation's shocked response to FDR's death and Truman's first bewildering months in office are ably described in *The Accidental President: Harry S. Truman and the Four Months That Changed the World*, by A.J. Baime. The momentous early months of Truman's administration saw one momentous headline after another—the suicide of Hitler and the surrender of Nazi Germany, victory at Okinawa, the liberation of concentration camps, the Potsdam Conference, the controversial decision to bomb Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the surrender of imperial Japan, and the founding of the United Nations.

Now, she wrote. Georgia's explanation for Maurice's visit appears in this important letter (*Correspondence,* pp. 272-273, Letter 48, April 10, 1945). The editor's interpretive notes are unfortunately misleading:

> It was apparently Chabot's resentment of Maurice Grosser's continuing presence at Ghost Ranch in 1944 that prompted O'Keeffe to ask her to

> leave. The precise nature of Chabot's resentment is not made clear in the correspondence (p. 273, n. 28).

There is no evidence in the correspondence (and elsewhere, that I could find) that Georgia told Maria to leave. In fact, on this occasion, O'Keeffe *invites* her to come "any time you want to—you will always be welcome." The letters (and Maria's letters to Dorothy during this period) suggest that their separation was a mutual decision that might have been renegotiated if it hadn't been for Wheelwright's intervention with the offer of Los Luceros.

It is accurate, however, to say that the letters do not reveal the "precise nature" of Maria's resentment of Georgia's relationship to Maurice. Her objection to what she saw as O'Keeffe's self-degrading, self-demeaning behavior is my interpretation of what happened, a view that is bolstered by her reticence on the subject. As Maria says in *Someone Always Nearby*, Georgia's unbecoming flirtation with a younger man is not the kind of issue you'd want to raise in a letter that might find its way into an archive—and Maria understood almost from the beginning of their correspondence that the letters would likely end up in a library. She was also aware that this was *not* a story that could be told during O'Keeffe`s lifetime. After four years in Georgia's company, Maria clearly understood the boundaries.

We also need to remember that the edited collection does not represent *all* the letters, or even the letters as they were written or received. Some have been reconstructed from the drafts Maria saved, others were damaged beyond reconstruction, and still others appear to have been lost. In real life, of course, and in her letters, Maria may have spelled out exactly why she felt the way she did. And Georgia (who had physical possession of letters written to her) might have destroyed such discomfiting letters—perhaps at the same time that she destroyed the painting she had dedicated to Maria.

Linda M. Grasso's excellent discussion of the problems of interpreting letter collections ("Reading Published Letter Collections as Literary Texts," Grasso, 2008), is especially helpful here. Grasso points out that the editors of *Correspondence* use the introduction and their notes to promote their version of the story as the "only one possible, the definitive truth" (p. 241). As I say in the acknowledgements for *Someone Always Nearby,* I am especially indebted to Grasso for confirming my initial feelings about Lynes' work and for articulating a paradigm of possibilities for reading the letters. I especially appreciate her remark about reading the letter collection as a

> kind of novel in which we see a development of characters and plot, and in which we expect some kind of transformative movement . . . in which the reader has to supply meaning, make connections, draw inferences, and come to terms with the ultimate indeterminability of human behavior.

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So I couldn't. The quotation is from *Correspondence,* p. 275, Letter 51, April 13, 1945—the letter that was actually sent. There are two other drafts in the O'Keeffe Archives, each more conciliatory. This is another instance in which Maria says what is in her heart—but guardedly.

The short run turned out. Georgia's explanation for Maurice's departure (the altitude didn't agree with him and "he bothers me") appears in *Correspondence,* p. 286, Letter 68, June 25, 1945. She mentions anticipating Maria's visit.

And she never. In her expanded edition of *Georgia O'Keeffe: A Life,* Roxana Robinson includes Georgia's recently discovered letters to Arthur Macmahon. For the relationship with Ted Reid, see Robinson, pp. 217-219; with Paul Strand, see *Foursome* by Carolyn Burke. The man O'Keeffe met in Hawaii was Willis Jennings, who managed one of the Dole pineapple plantations that she visited on her painting trip. Jennings is not mentioned in any of the biographies, all of which were published before Patricia Jennings wrote about O'Keeffe's flirtation with her father in her book about the O'Keeffe visit. (See Chapter Three, key phrase *Georgia isn't a prude*.) For Toomer, see Drohojowska-Philp, pp. 350-352. Arguing that theirs was a sexual relationship, the biographer quotes O'Keeffe's sexually explicit January 10, 1934, letter to Toomer: "I like knowing the feel of your maleness. I wish so hotly to feel you hold me very very tight and warm to you" (Drohojowska-Philp, p. 351). For Beck Strand, see Hogrefe, pp. 143,147. For the O'Keeffe-Luhan-Lujan triad, see Hogrefe, p. 147, and Chapter Fourteen in Burke's *Foursome.*

Of course none. People who knew her closely had different opinions about O'Keeffe's sex life. Phoebe Pack told one biographer that she thought Georgia preferred only women (Hogrefe, p. 183). Maria would tell another biographer, "I would not say in any sense of the word was Georgia a lesbian. Her life was about work, not sex. She was not interested in human relationships" (Drohojowska-Philp, p. 433). Of all the biographers, Hogrefe confronts the issue most directly.

Playwright Carolyn Gage, in the introduction to her 2023 play *Georgia and the Butch,* sees O'Keeffe this way:

> If lesbian narratives were more culturally accessible, Georgia, as she comes across in the letters, might appear to reflect the archetypal ambivalence of the deeply closeted lesbian or bisexual who craves the attention and companionship of an "out" lesbian, but who fears for her reputation, alternating between cultivating emotional intimacy and actively discouraging it. (p. 7)

But while I heard. Maurice Grosser is not mentioned in any of the biographies. The only mentions of him occur in the Chabot-O'Keeffe letters, documenting his importance to both women, in different ways. The biographers did not, of course, have access to the letters, which were not published until 2003.

And there was Becky. For Beck James' interesting backstory (her father had been a managing partner in Buffalo Bill's internationally successful Wild West Show) and her life in Taos (a different kind of Wild West), the best source is Carolyn Burke's *Foursome*. The conversation with Maria is completely imagined, including Becky's fictional conversation with Maurice.

Her slave? In a 1987 interview with biographer Benita Eisler, Maria said that freeing Georgia to paint had been her mission during the early 1940s. "O'Keeffe knew her women," Eisler writes:

> She knew that Chabot, like Beck Strand, would fall into her predestined role: facilitating Georgia's work as a way of avoiding the terror of being tested by her own. "I was the second of O'Keeffe's slaves," Chabot recalled. "Beck Strand was the first" (Eisler, p. 472).

Eisler's comment about Maria's avoidance of her own work doesn't seem fair. In letters (to Georgia, to Dorothy, to her mother) Maria reports that she wrote constantly ("tending to my knitting," she calls it euphemistically), often getting up before dawn to spend a couple of hours at her typewriter. From the beginning of their relationship, Georgia objected to her publishing anything about their time together. Indeed, as the editors of the *Correspondence* point out (p. xxii) Maria was eager to publish their letters and approached Georgia numerous times on the question. She photocopied Georgia's letters and asked Georgia for copies of hers. Georgia refused. It wasn't until after Georgia died and the O'Keeffe Foundation was established that Maria was able to begin obtaining the letters she had written, with the intention of publishing them.

Maria's submission of her other work is documented by the rejection letters in the O'Keeffe Archive. The 1930s and 1940s were a difficult time for a woman writer to get debut work published, and the 1950s and 1960s—when women's books made up only fifteen to eighteen percent of the books published—didn't offer that many more opportunities. She might have written for regional magazines, but paper shortages made these almost nonexistent during the war years and they didn't begin to appear until the 1980s. And as Maria herself pointed out, she had to work for a living, and (as we have seen) her work afforded her little time for writing.

PART THREE:
GOING AWAY, 1945-1981

CHAPTER EIGHT
MARIA: THE FARAWAY NEARBY

TIME AND PLACE

The summer of 1945. Los Luceros, Abiquiu, and Ghost Ranch.

WHAT HAPPENS IN THIS CHAPTER

Maria, now living and working at Los Luceros, continues her friendship with Georgia. The pair exchanges many letters when they're apart and see one another frequently when Georgia is at Ghost Ranch. The war is brought to an end by the bomb that was developed by the Los Alamos scientists who had visited the ranch the previous summer. Georgia buys the Abiquiu hacienda and Maria, who greatly admires efforts by her Santa Fe friends to revive the native architecture of the Southwestern desert region, volunteers to rebuild it for her.

FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION

1. Why do you think Maria is so intent on rebuilding the Abiquiu house? At one point, she wonders whether the project further "indentures" her to Georgia at a time when their working relationship has ended. Do you think this is true? What other motivations might she have? What might be going on here?
2. Why do you think Georgia kept the news about the house from her husband? Are these the same reasons it took her so long to tell him about the Ghost Ranch house? What does this suggest about their relationship? What do you think Stieglitz means when he writes to Maria that he is "eternally" in her debt?
3. At the end of Chapter Eight, Maria says that the house she is building in the village of Abiquiu could be something like Oppenheimer's bomb. What might she mean by that? What changes might the presence of an internationally-known artist have on the traditional lifestyles of Abiquiu residents? What advantages might it have brought them? What disadvantages? Have you seen similar situations, perhaps

where neighborhoods were altered by the influx of larger residences? By gentrification? By changes in land use and value?

FOR FURTHER STUDY

Catherine Colby's book, *Kate Chapman: Adobe Builder in 1930s Santa Fe*, gives us a new way to view the famous O'Keeffe house in Abiquiu—as part of a determined, decades-long conservation effort by a community of Anglo women adobe builders in Santa Fe, eager to preserve a traditional building style practiced by Pueblo Indians. This is an unexplored area that might reward further study.

There was a story. The story of the Abiqueños' insistence on building their church *their* way illustrates both the importance of the church in the village and the unusually stubborn character of the villagers. The source: Analita Dunning's post on the history of the Abiquiu church, "Santa Rosa de Lima and Santo Tomás de Apostle: A Chronological Essay."

That seductive old. Beginning in early 1943, the Abiquiu house is frequently mentioned in the letters. Georgia was interested in it as a place to live during the winters after Stieglitz was gone and she relocated permanently to New Mexico. Maria's interest had more to do with the challenge of restoring the historically important old building and contributing to the regional preservation movement that had been underway in Santa Fe since the mid-1920s, funded and enthusiastically supported by people like Dorothy Stewart and her sister Margretta Dietrich and executed by women architect-builders like Kate Chapman.. As Catherine Colby writes in her book, *Kate Chapman: Adobe Builder in 1930s Santa Fe,* these women were committed to honoring the regional architectural heritage that incorporated features found in the oldest Santa Fe buildings and in the nearby pueblos.

It is important to see Chabot's quite impressive reconstruction of the Abiquiu House in the context of this largely amateur revival effort. Professional architects, Colby says, were "conspicuously absent" from this kind of construction. In their place, self-taught builders like Chapman employed a "freehand architecture, with the living quality of a sculptor's work" (Colby, quoting Carlos Vierra, p. 15). For them, adobe building became an art form—an explicitly *indigenous* art form—that celebrated the region's history, landscape, social relationships, and native materials. Maria wasn't just building a house for O'Keeffe (although that was undoubtedly part of her motivation.) She was joining this community preservation effort and rebuilding something culturally important. These items provide some context:

- A photo of women "mudding" an adobe wall
- A photo of Hopi women constructing an adobe pueblo in Arizona

- An interview with two contemporary women adobe builders in New Mexico

And I enjoyed. Maria describes her farm work in detail in letters she writes to Georgia in April and May, 1945, 1946, and 1947. Her letters to her mother during this period are revealing as well.

Unknown photographer. Maria Chabot Cutting Aspen on the Martinez Ranch, 1947. photographic print. Georgia O'Keeffe Foundation Photographs. Georgia O'Keeffe Museum. Gift of The Georgia O'Keeffe Foundation. [2006.6.361]

The party was fun. Maria relates her preparations, which involved the extensive work of finding and butchering an appropriately sized pig, in *Correspondence,* p. 289, Letter 72, September 17, 1945. She refers to the next day's "blowup" with Georgia on p. 290, Letter 74, September 20, 1945. If there is evidence to support Lynes' assertion (p. 291) that Maria resented others for visiting the Black Place with Georgia, it is not evident in the letters. (Lynes cites no other source.) On this occasion, Maria may simply have felt that Georgia didn't appreciate the extra work she had put into procuring and preparing the pig, which was the bulk of the work for the party.

Afterward, I wrote. Maria's lesson: "I am sorry every visit with you has to end as it does. The lesson seems to be not to come to stay. We can't seem to manage otherwise" (*Correspondence,* p. 290, Letter 74, September 20, 1945). The tone of this letter suggests that a now more-mature Maria is beginning to understand and accept only her share of the responsibility for disagreements with Georgia.

There was another. The meeting actually took place, but there is no documentation for it. The scene is imagined.

She was right. In a 1981 oral history interview with Laura Soullière Gates (a member of the planning team for the O'Keeffe Historic Landmark site), O'Keeffe remembered Chabot's enthusiasm for the project: "She was crazy to do a house and she was crazy to do this house" (quoted in Burt, p. 11, n. 15). O'Keeffe's perceptive remark, off-hand as it was, helps to clarify Maria's motivation for this project. It wasn't just "this house" that intrigued her. Her decade-long affiliation with the community of women adobe-builders in Santa Fe had given her a deep appreciation of the importance of traditional building practices. She saw the old house in the larger context of adobe preservation. But it was also "*this* house." Maria understood the importance of preserving the Chavez house as an example of the historically important Spanish/Pueblo style in a village setting.—in *this* village, which is also historically important. In the letters, it is evident that she is uneasy with the modern adaptations that make the house more livable for O'Keeffe.

Part of my enthusiasm. Kate Chapman's unexpected death is noted in Colby, p. 80. Colby adds that soon afterward, Dorothy Stewart (a close friend of Chapman and deeply affected by her death) made her will, giving Maria the Chapman-built adobe studio and two acres on Arroyo de las Moras, just outside of Santa Fe. Later, she would also leave her Canyon Road adobe to Maria. It's worth noticing that she did not leave these properties to Agnes Sims. They may have parted company by this time (1944).

Archbishop Byrne appeared. The description of Byrne is drawn from "Rainbows with Ragged Edges: Archbishop Edwin V. Byrne" by Sister Miriam Thérèse in *Records of the American Catholic Historical Society of Philadelphia*, Vol. 94, No. 1/4 (March - December, 1983), pp. 61-79. This meeting is imagined, but something very like it happened about this time. It would take a few more months to work out the details, and a few more months for O'Keeffe to make the first payment. But when the archbishop agreed to sell her the house, the deal was essentially done.

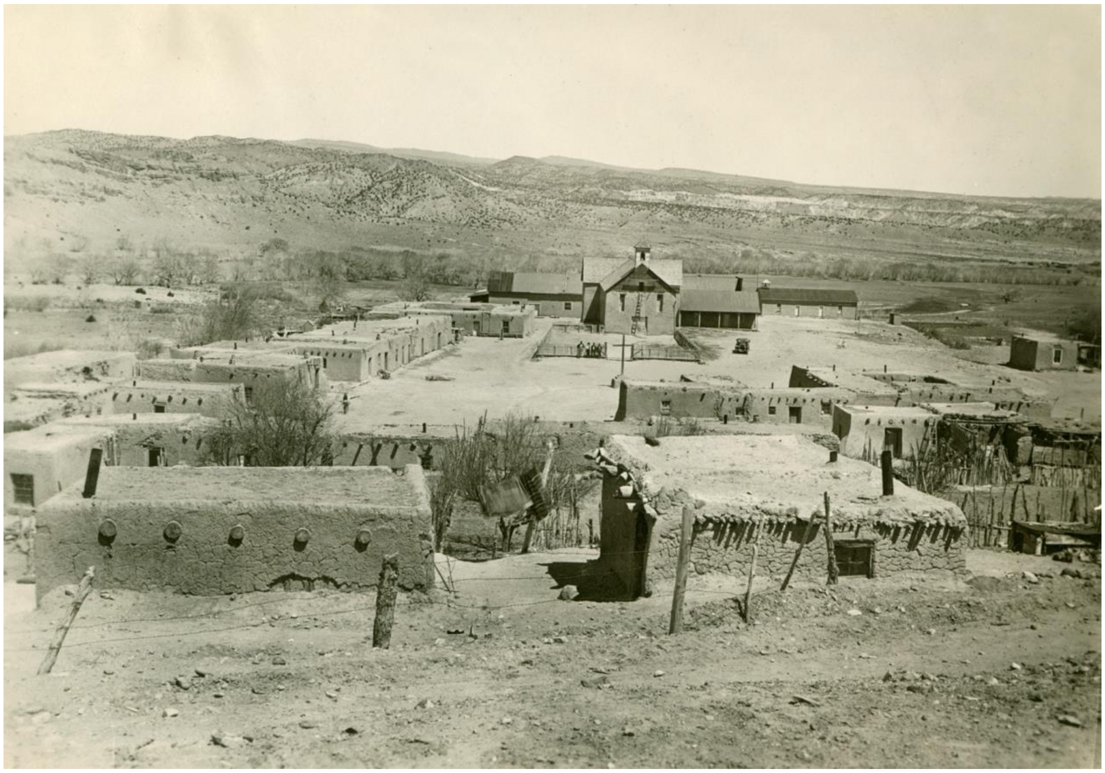
His Excellency seemed. The amount finally settled upon was a $2,500 gift to the church (a tax write-off for O'Keeffe, who made a point of this in several letters), plus $500 in direct payment for the house (a total of about $49,500 in today's dollars). In her excellent book, *Georgia O'Keeffe and Her Houses: Abiquiu and Ghost Ranch,* Barbara Lynes says that O'Keeffe spent another $30,000 to $40,000 in its renovation (Lynes, 2012, p. 112). In 2022 money, that's a total of about $550,000-$650,000.

The second week. Stieglitz's remark appears in *Correspondence,* p. 293, Letter 80, November 13, 1945. Maria's reply: p. 295, Letter 82, November 18, 1945.

For nearly two months. On Christmas Eve, 1945, Georgia wrote to Maria that she had finally found another maid, a Finn who "looks very healthy." She also sent a check for the house. "I have a fine time thinking about it" (*Correspondence,* p. 300, Letter 88, December 24, 1945). Three months later, however, Maria had to remind her to pay the remaining $1,000 on the purchase so work could begin on the house (p. 322, Letter 17, March 4, 1946). Keeping a wary eye on her money at a time when the sale of paintings was likely slow, Georgia replied that she was making the payment, although she would rather wait until her income warranted it (p. 324, Letter 20, March 7, 1946).

And a couple. A salesman for a pump that was being considered for the house had called, but Georgia told Maria that she couldn't talk to him because Alfred was home. "He is the sort of person . . ." occurs in *Correspondence,* p. 336, Letter 32, March 19, 1946. There is no indication in the letters that Georgia ever told her husband about her purchase of the Abiquiu house.

ABIQUIU



Plaza, Abiquiu, New Mexico, ca. 1915-1920? Photographer: T. Harmon Parkhurst, Negative Number: 013698. Courtesy Palace of the Governors Photo Archives. The house O'Keeffe purchased is behind the church on the far side of the plaza. The village looked very much like this when Maria began construction on the Chavez house.

For centuries, the Apache, Navajo, Pueblo, and Ute peoples forged trails in and out of the rugged Rio Chama valley, while Tewa and other Pueblo peoples farmed along its river. The creation of New Spain in 1535, and then the extension of the Spanish Empire into the Southwest in the 1600s, transformed the region. By the 1700s, the Rio Chama valley had become a violent imperial frontier marked by deadly clashes, retaliatory raids, and a brutal trade in Native slaves. The conflicts

> forever altered the lives of Native peoples, including the Genízaro of Abiquiú in northern New Mexico.
>
> "The Genízaro Pueblo of Abiquiú," by Russell Albert Daniels

> "Writing about Abiquiu," F. Stanley confesses, "is like picking at a tassel. Any strand you pick up ultimately proves a story." It is easier to write about Elizabethtown, the nineteenth-century New Mexico boomtown, where one theme and one culture predominated, and where only a ghost survives. Abiquiu, a living community where manifold themes and at least three cultures have shared the stage, holds out the challenge and the savor of variety . . . Yet if we aspire, as we say we do, to grasp the interaction of cultures through time, what better "laboratory" than Abiquiu?
>
> —John L. Kessell,
> "Sources for the History of a New Mexico Community: Abiquiu"

There's much more to Abiquiu than O'Keeffe. Below are some of the materials that document the enormous changes this little community has undergone over the past five centuries. Perhaps they will help you imagine the various lives of the village throughout its long existence. One comment on the BACA webpage (last item, below) may be especially provocative. Abiquiu today, BACA says, is "a community that has, for the past three-quarters of a century been seen as the setting for the life of one person: O'Keeffe"—a limited and limiting view. Abiquiu is much more than the village where a famous artist once live. Please take the time to dig, like archaeologists and historians, into its multi-layered past. Ask yourself how comfortably a modernist painter might fit (or might not) into the life of this ancient community.

For Your Consideration

1. Before the arrival of Georgia O'Keeffe, the pueblo (later, the village) of Abiquiu had a long and rich history that is now overshadowed by the artist's fame. Geographically, historically, and socially, what stands out for you regarding this ancient village?
2. Places exist in time and times change. Describe some of the cultural dissonance that developed after the influx of the Spanish in the early 1500's. Is any of this visible today? In what ways?
3. Writing about Abiquiu, historian John Kessell calls it a "laboratory" for understanding the intersections of cultures across time. How does the residence and studio of a famous American woman artist fit into this

"laboratory"? What kind of changes might it have introduced into the village?

4. As we look out at the horizon of the twenty-first century, we can see that even more changes are on the way. What are the most important of these? How inevitable are they? How do you think this village will adapt?

EXPLORE ONLINE

1. View the fascinating photo essay, "The Genízaro Pueblo of Abiquiú," by Russell Albert Daniels.
2. Watch "Living Cultures: Genízaro Traditions Today," a video conversation with an intergenerational panel of Abiquiu residents exploring how Genízaro identity and traditions have been passed down through the generations in this unique village.
3. Witness five sacred dances performed by Las Inditas del Pueblo de Abiquiúare Genízaro community, at La Morada de Nuestra Señora de Dolores del Alto in Abiquiu.
4. Join State Historian Robert Martinez for "Brujeria: A History of Witchcraft in New Mexico." The section on Abiquiu begins at 20:01.

BACKGROUND READING

Berkeley-Abiquiú Collaborative Archaeology (BACA) Partnership, This team of archaeologists and residents aims to provide a wider cultural view of a community that has, for the past three-quarters of a century been seen as the setting for the life of one person: O'Keeffe. "While O'Keefe's work is beautiful and regarded as some of the best early Modernist art," the website observes, "it presents a limited and problematic view of the Abiquiu landscape, mainly because the land portrayed is void of people." This archeological partnership aims to bring the people—contemporary descendants and their ancestors—back into the village landscape. Another report on this project: "Abiquiú Library's Archaeology Dig," in *Rio Grande Sun,* June 26, 2014.

Burt, Sarah L. "Georgia O'Keeffe Home and Studio." National Historic Landmark Nomination Form. U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1998. Important in part for its summary of the history of the Montoya-Chavez hacienda and its role in the village, before it became the home of a famous artist. Also important for its documentation of Maria Chabot's skilled and dedicated work on the construction project.

Kessell, John L. "Sources for the History of a New Mexico Community: Abiquiù." *New Mexico Historical Review*, Vol. 54, No.4, 1979. An entertaining, invaluable, and maddeningly exhaustive review of just about everything ever written about Abiquiu, through 1979. A history in itself, with sections on Prehistory, Indians, Spanish Colonial, Mexican, Territorial, and the twentieth century.

Poling-Kempes, Lesley. *Valley of Shining Stone: The Story of Abiquiu.* University of Arizona Press, 1997. Simply the most readable book you'll find on the region and on Abiquiu itself. Read this first, to get a glimpse of the pre-O'Keeffe history of this important village.

Weigle, Marta. *Brothers of Light, Brothers of Blood: The Penitentes of the Southwest*. University of New Mexico Press, 1976. A thoroughly documented history of the Penitente Brotherhood in New Mexico and Colorado. Origins, historical, and ecclesiastical contexts, political and social functions crucial to Hispanic community survival in times of threat. Aimed, in Weigle's words, "to serve as the obituary for the seemingly endless stream of irresponsible, secondary, sensational palaver about the Brotherhood."

CHAPTER NINE
MARIA: THE HOUSE AT ABIQUIU

TIME AND PLACE

1946. Los Luceros, Abiquiu, Ghost Ranch.

WHAT HAPPENS IN THIS CHAPTER

Maria begins to recreate the garden, which involves soil restoration and the replanting of trees, as well as the construction of terraces. She works on the compound's adobe wall, then clears out the accumulated trash of decades so she can measure the rooms and make necessary changes to the floor plan, including the large studio-bedroom-bathroom addition on the north side of the existing house. Georgia, deeply engaged with her New York life (and especially with her show at the Museum of Modern Art) finds it difficult to pay attention to the rebuilding, and Maria must make construction decisions alone. She is also juggling the field work at Los Luceros, where her life is complicated by Mary Wheelwright's arrival in May. Mary has no sooner left for China than Georgia arrives in June, intending to stay the summer at Ghost Ranch. She and Maria begin working on the Abiquiu house, but their collaboration ends the next month when Stieglitz's doctor calls to tell Georgia she'd better come back to New York; Stieglitz is quite ill. Georgia refuses, believing that it is another of her husband's attempts to keep her close. But she is wrong. Stieglitz dies four days later.

FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION

1. Maria tells Georgia she doesn't want her to "look like a walled-in millonaria." Rather, it should look like O'Keeffe and her house "belong in the village." But even if the house appears to "belong" in the village, that doesn't necessarily apply to its resident. For over three decades, O'Keeffe spent summers at Ghost Ranch and winters in Abiquiu. Do you think she ever really "belonged"? If so, in what sense? If not, why?
2. How does someone "belong" to a place? Is there a place where you belong? Is that a passive or an active experience?

3. Maria works at both Los Luceros and Abiquiu. Do you think she belongs to either community? If so, in what ways? How?
4. Payment for Maria's work was an important issue that clouded the Chabot/O'Keeffe relationship. Why? Is there something more involved here, beyond the money itself? How could this situation have been remedied, do you think? Why didn't that happen?

FOR FURTHER STUDY

If you would like to learn more about Maria's work on the Abiquiu house, watch Katherine Bole's fascinating presentation of the "cultural landscapes" of the Abiquiu house. Bole's informative talk is illustrated with Maria's photographs and her architectural and garden plans. The first fifteen minutes of the presentation focuses on the landscapes around the house; through about the 23-minute mark, on the construction of the house; the rest is devoted to the creation of the garden. The presentation is referred to several times in the notes to this chapter.

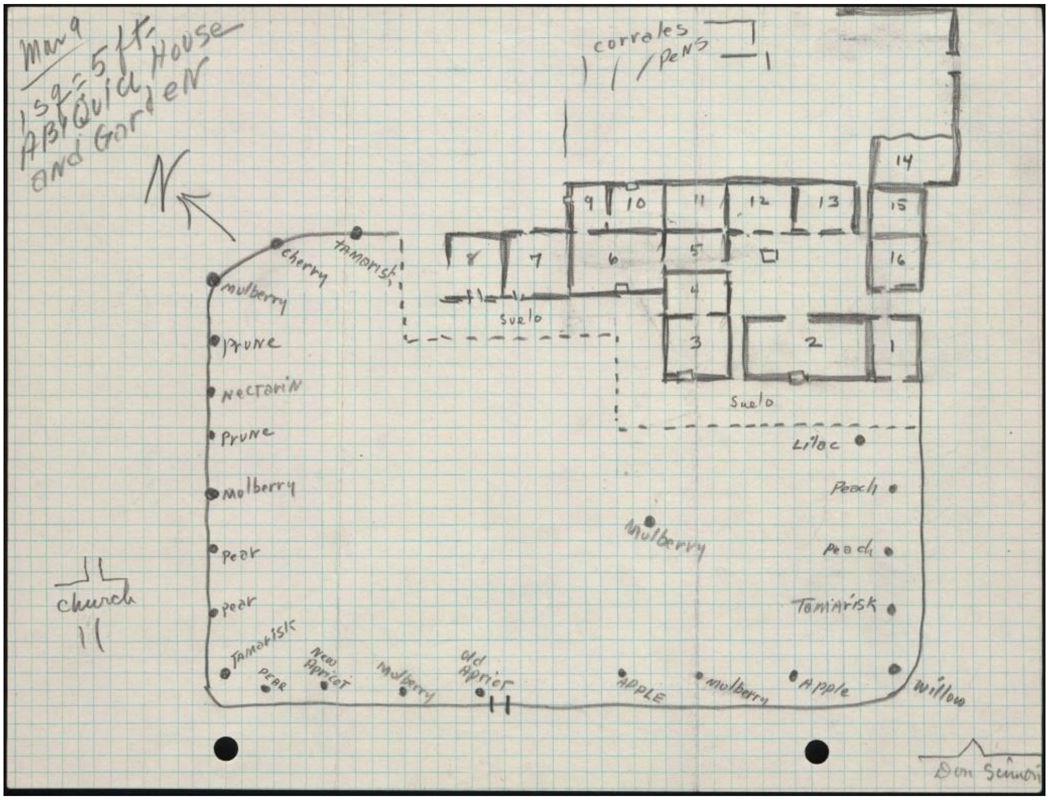
The ruined wall. Maria left San Antonio earlier than usual and was already living in her cottage at Los Luceros by March 1, 1946. It was still winter, but she got to work immediately, organizing the various projects—cleaning up the site, finding craftspeople and laborers, getting workman's compensation insurance, locating equipment, negotiating for construction materials, making adobe bricks—tasks that needed to precede the actual construction.

Maria was very well qualified to undertake work on the old Chavez house. Before coming to Santa Fe in 1934, she had studied archaeology and ethnology in Mexico City. In Santa Fe, she was hired to photograph Spanish Colonial design as part of a New Deal project. Two years later, she began working as executive secretary of the New Mexico Association on Indian Affairs and eventually for the federal government as production advisor of the Indian Arts and Crafts. In those jobs, she spent time in all the local pueblos, witnessing traditional adobe construction underway. She was also an active member of the circle of women adobe-builders in Santa Fe that included Kate Chapman, Dorothy Stewart, and Margretta Dietrich, among others. In addition, she had been deeply involved in the extensive renovation of her grandparents' historic mansion in San Antonio, doing some of the actual work herself.

However, when Lynes and Paden compiled the *Correspondence* collection, they chose to "extensively edit" or entirely exclude what they considered Maria's "technical" detail about both the Ghost Ranch and Abiquiu houses and the garden at Abiquiu (*Correspondence,* p. 59, n. 2). This has the unfortunate effect of limiting our understanding of how the work was done as well as diminishing Maria's quite remarkable competency in the design and construction of this now famous house and garden. Absent this context of "technical" detail, Maria's frequent and sometimes plaintive requests for O'Keeffe's attention to the construction project makes her sound like a querulous child begging for attention. A reading of the 1945-1949 unedited letters in the Archive would reveal the full extent of her role as decision maker and lead partner on the construction, while the owner was preoccupied with her New York life and either acquiesced in or failed to respond to requests for participation in the process.

I don't want. Maria's remark about the "millonaria" appears in *Correspondence,* p. 339, Letter 35, March 26, 1946.

But now Flora. As Maria relates in her early 1946 letters, the villagers told her all sorts of things about the house. Don Luis Chavez, one of the family that had built it, told her that several of the rooms were called the "Ute rooms"—rooms where enslaved Indians were confined when they weren't working. The *sala* (the hall) had been built when Don Jose Maria Chavez was a general in the Civil War; he and his wife lived to be over one hundred and died in the house. Every room had its own ghost, and so on.


Mar 9
1 sq = 5 ft.
ABIQUIU HOUSE
and Garden
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corrales
/ PeNS
cherry
tamarisk
mulberry
prune
Nectarin
prune
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church
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Sketch of Abiquiu House and garden, drawn by Maria Chabot, in March 1946.
Image courtesy Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

The construction process got off to a rocky start. Joe Ferran finally removed his pigs and chickens from what used to be the main room, but the priest was indignant that Maria had started work before O'Keeffe made her final payment. Maria, increasingly confident in her new role as Georgia's spokeswoman, said she sent word to the priest that they were now dealing directly "with the archbishop, amen" (*Correspondence,* p. 331, Letter 28, March 13, 1946).

One major point of discussion in these months was the location of Georgia's studio. Maria wanted to put it out on the edge of the mesa, in the large empty rectangle at the top of the drawing above, once the site of a wooden garage and an adobe-walled corral. She proposed a studio-bedroom-bathroom suite, with a ten-by-sixteen-feet window on the long wall of the studio. It would face northeast, offering a panoramic view of the mesas of the White Place, the River Chama below, and the mountains beyond (*Correspondence,* p. 331, Letter 27, March 12, 1946). A big picture window, of course, is a modern architectural feature, familiar now but unusual at that time and certainly in the setting of a Spanish/Pueblo reconstruction, where windows were typically quite small.

Georgia (who was busy selecting the paintings for her 1946 show at the Museum of Modern Art) didn't like the idea of a studio removed from the house, and much back-and-forth discussion ensued about the functions of all the rooms. The letters of January through May, 1946, reveal the fascinating way the two women advanced their ideas; tested, adopted, rejected, and compromised; and then moved forward. The letters deserve to be studied in detail, with the edited "technical" detail restored, so that the process of debate and resolution can be fully understood.

In the plan. In her highly detailed, well designed and delivered video presentation (mentioned above), Katherine Boles speaks extensively about Maria's plans for and work on the Abiquiu garden, with drawings and photographs. For a discussion of the construction, begin at the 26-minute mark.

All this cost. Maria's diligent records of her expenditures are held in the O'Keeffe Archive. In 1946, for example, she documented expenses in Cash Book 1, March 13 to October 6, 1946. Georgia's reminder about Maria's tendency to take on too many tasks (an understandable and well-meant caution) appears in *Correspondence,* pp. 310-311, Letter 7, February 8, 1946.

Unfortunately, our discussion. Maria's remark about being "paid off" and Georgia being "done with all obligation" appears in *Correspondence,* p. 364, Letter 68, May 22, 1946.

The next January. (*Correspondence,* p. 388, Letter 1, 1947) The $600 that Georgia paid Maria for her nine months of work (Georgia counted only six) amounts to about $8,000 in today's money—about $220 a week. Even if Maria spent only half of the workweek on the Abiquiu project (most weeks, she sent more), that would bring the hourly pay for her work to $11 (current value). Starbucks' current hourly average starting pay is $13.27.

What I know. In a 1955 letter to Anita Pollitzer, O'Keeffe ponders the nature of her transactional friendships with the women who cook and clean, the men who bring wood and frame her paintings, her doctor, her paid travel companions. It seems to be a rare realization for her, and perhaps long overdue: the more someone does for her, the more likely she is to consider that person a friend and to reciprocate by doing something in return. She concludes:

> I have a new woman here to take care of me and tend to the many things that have to be done—I've had her 2 weeks and my life is so much easier that maybe such a one is a friend—I don't know . . . The term "friend" is an odd word (O'Keeffe to Pollitzer, October 24, 1955, in *Lovingly, Georgia,* pp. 301-302).

And when would. Martin Bode agreed to sell electricity (but not water) to O'Keeffe until a public utility provided power to Abiquiu. Public electricity came from Taos through Española in 1948. It was thought at the time that the dam rumored to be constructed on the Chama River would provide hydroelectric power, but when the Abiquiu Dam was built in 1963, it was designed only for flood control and irrigation and not adapted for hydroelectric until 1990. The cost of the Abiquiu house water pump, installation, and irrigation piping estimated by George Bell came to about $15,000 in today's money (*Correspondence,* p. 325, Letter 21, March 7, 1946). Maria was quite aware that she was asking O'Keeffe to make a significant investment in the project.

Georgia was living. Maria found it hard to get Georgia's attention for important construction decisions, and her letters during this period reflect her frustration. But she forged ahead, knowing that the building season was short. (Getting answers from O'Keeffe would prove to be an even more difficult task in 1947 and 1948, when the artist spent most of the year in New York.) Sarah Burt, who prepared the National Historic Landmark Nomination for O'Keeffe's Abiquiu house, describes Maria's major structural redesigns. The Nomination is an excellent, readable source of detailed, nuts-and-bolts description of Maria's extensive construction plans and decisions, most of which she made alone, by default, as the letters demonstrate. At one point, Georgia simply gives up trying to deal with construction issues: "Make your own decisions," she writes. "I am so busy [with the MOMA exhibit] I only work and drop on my bed" (*Correspondence,* p. 324, Letter 20, March 7, 1946). It probably didn't help matters that in the very same letter, Georgia reported that she had tickets to a performance of Bach's *St. Matthew's Passion* that night.

Another, more narrative source for Maria's construction work is Barbara Lynes' heavily illustrated book, *Georgia O'Keeffe and Her Houses: Ghost Ranch and Abiquiu.* Some of the "technical details" that Lynes omitted from the letters are reported there.

The most pressing. The Historic Landmark Nomination includes a description of what Maria started with when she began work on the studio:

> The *tepeste*, or old corral building, consisted of low adobe walls [made of double adobes, two bricks deep] and an improvised roof made of *vigas* and tree branches to protect the animals in winter. When Chabot began work on the studio, the only solid construction left intact was a 6-foot-long and 5-foot-high mud wall that she retained and extended to the ceiling to close off the bedroom from the studio. The wall remnant became a ledge in O'Keeffe's bedroom upon which she displayed rocks and other found objects (Burt, p. 12).

Georgia's statement ("I hadn't intended . . . ") occurs in her recorded interview with Soullière, March 25, 1981 (Burt, p. 11).

Which was true. In a long, fascinating letter (*Correspondence,* pp. 334-335, Letter 31, March 18, 1946), Maria tells about a Sunday trip she made to the Polvadera sawmill at Copper Canyon, to find eighteen-feet-long *vigas* for the studio ceiling. In Abiquiu, she picked up four people (including the Bodes). They "grabbed weenies and prune juice" from the store and spent the day in the mountains. Back in Abiquiu that evening, they sat by the fire, drinking coffee and whiskey. Her work on the house brought Maria into a close, companionable relationship with members of the community in a way that Georgia could never have duplicated, even if that were her intention. (It wasn't.) The remark about seeing the dawn and feeling the wheel of the seasons occurs in this letter.

While I was building. Georgia describes her busy city life in her letters of early 1945 and 1946. They are the most complete documentation of her activities in New York—friends she saw, places she went, work she did. There apparently wasn't much painting going on, but *Abstraction,* one of the pieces of sculpture she modeled with her close friend Mary Callery during these months (and later cast in bronze), sold in 2014 for $1,061,000. For details, see "Lot Essay," Georgia O'Keeffe (1887-1986) *Abstraction,* Christie's Auction House.

Most importantly. You can view nine images from the May 14-August 25, 1946, exhibit, as well as a press release and the exhibit checklist (a list of the fifty-seven works shown) on the Museum of Modern Art website.

The show was positively. Biographer Laurie Lisle observes that O'Keeffe was not pleased with McBride's review. "She probably didn't care much for his playing up her good fortune and playing down her diligence and genius," Lisle remarks. (Lisle,1997, p. 348). Lisle's treatment of the O'Keeffe/Stieglitz dynamics around this show—the last before his death—is the most interesting of any in the biographies. Stieglitz was "melancholy," Lisle writes. "He was satisfied that he had brought the gifts of the girl from Texas before the world and convinced it to recognize them, but he felt eclipsed and knew that there was nothing more he was able to do for her" (p. 347).

And for myself. Maria reports her "banner day" and other triumphs in *Correspondence,* pp. 333-334, Letter 30, March 15, and in other letters written around that time. Georgia rarely replies with anything like a similar enthusiasm. One example: "The house as you write about it sounds very interesting." As an afterthought, she adds, "It sounds wonderful" (*Correspondence,* p. 336, Letter 32, March 19, 1946).

I had my frustrations. Maria's tale of the Palvadera sawmill and the boss's love affair: *Correspondence,* p. 353, Letter 51, April 23, 1946. The story of the gas truck: p. 359, Letter 61, after May 10, 1946. She wonders why in the hell she bothers in Letter 53, April 27, 1946, p. 354.

"Oh Georgia," I wrote. Maria's tongue-in-cheek but quite accurate lament about Georgia's servitude to MOMA and her own slavery to Los Luceros appears in *Correspondence,* p. 347, Letter 44, April 8, 1946.

He didn't recover. Robinson's account of Stieglitz's death: pp. 630-632. Drohojowska-Philp: pp. 416-418.

CHAPTER TEN
GEORGIA: ALWAYS THERE, ALWAYS GOING AWAY

TIME AND PLACE

July 1946 to June 1949

WHAT HAPPENS IN THIS CHAPTER

After Stieglitz's death, Georgia manages the funeral and buries her husband's ashes. Maria brings the things she requested from the ranch, but Georgia sends her away, further disillusioning an already disenchanted Maria. O'Keeffe banishes Dorothy Norman from the gallery and, as executor of Stieglitz's will, hires Dorothy's secretary, Doris Bry, to help her deal with the settlement of his estate and the disposal of his extensive and valuable art collection. But members of the Stieglitz family challenge the will and the litigation takes more than two years. Georgia returns to Ghost Ranch briefly but finds it difficult to paint. Back in New York for the winter of 1946-47, she arranges two exhibits of Stieglitz's work and (with the help of Doris Bry) begins distributing his art works, letters, and papers. After an unsuccessful show at The Place, she arranges with Edith Halpert to hang her work at Halpert's Downtown Gallery. The art work distributed, the papers archived, and Stieglitz's will settled, she is free—finally—to return to New Mexico, where she will live for the rest of her life.

FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION

1. What do you think about the way Georgia handled Stieglitz's last illness and death? What are the major effects of his death on her life? On Maria?
2. Why do you think Georgia rebuffs Maria when Maria comes to New York? How does Maria deal with this? How might you have felt and acted, if you had been rejected in this way?
3. What do you think of Georgia's treatment of Dorothy Norman? Is it justified? How does Norman prove useful to O'Keeffe? What's going on here?

4. Who are Doris Bry and Edith Halpert? In what ways are these women useful to the artist? How do they help her continue her New York life?

FOR FURTHER STUDY

Georgia left little record of the emotional tumult she must have experienced in these difficult years as she was dealing with the trauma of her husband's death. The situation was made more difficult by her own deeply felt guilt and exacerbated by the disapproval of the Stieglitz clan and the continuing presence of Stieglitz's longtime lover. Her letters to Maria give us some clues, as do the privately shared comments of friends like Ansel Adams and Nancy Newcomb. But the letters do give us a good idea of what her New York life was like in this interim period, as she was disposing of Steiglitz's collections and planning a new life in New Mexico.

But she does battle. Hogrefe (p. 239) tells us where Georgia located the coffin. Robinson names the Upper East Side mortuary, "too elegant for O'Keeffe's taste" (p. 632) and relays the dramatic little anecdote that Georgia told and retold, of replacing the coffin's pink satin lining in an all-night sew-a-thon. Eisler (p. 479) corrects the narrative of the lining replacement: "In fact, she had ordered a plain white sheet delivered along with the unlined coffin . . ." Yale librarian Donald Gallup, to whom Georgia confessed her little funereal fiction, relates the corrected story in *Pigeons on the Granite* (p. 240)*,* along with a lengthy and detailed recollection (pp. 221-252) of their friendship. His descriptions of his New Mexico visits and of O'Keeffe's friendships in the years after she left New York are very much worth reading.

The Sunday morning. Flora Strauss made the comment, "We never worried . . ." It was reported to biographer Drohojowska-Philp by Dorothy Norman in a 1987 interview (p. 419).

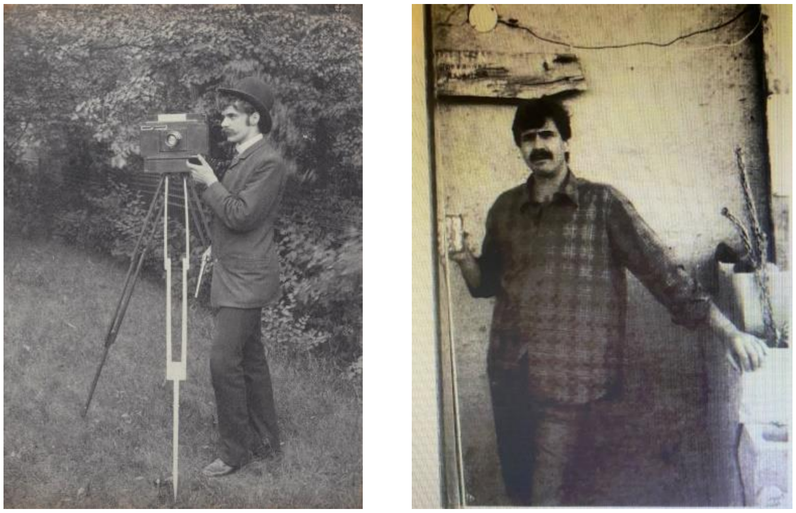
Naïve and almost. Dorothy Norman writes about her long love affair with Alfred Stieglitz in *Encounters: A Memoir* (Harcourt, 1987). Of their initial meeting, Norman writes, "Within a split second, an inner music soars" (Norman, p. 54).

Has Maria presumed. We know about this meeting only because Maria, still smarting from the rejection, refers to it in a later letter: ". . . listen, O'Keeffe, you made me feel as though I suffocated you in New York—and I haven't gotten over it yet—the damned things I learned and the hurt of it" (*Correspondence,* pp. 372-373, Letter 81, August 18, 1946.). For the fiction, I have assumed that Maria felt deeply hurt when she heard Georgia refer to her as a "slave," which she did on several occasions.

But not for Maria. Of all the people Georgia knew in her long life, Maria Chabot may have been the only one who could say to her, "Perhaps I am trying to save you from yourself" or "I'd so much rather write to you than ever see you again." Lynes notes (p. 368, n. 38) that letters have been lost during this period of time. Maria's observations occur in *Correspondence,* p. 373-374, Letter 82, August 19, 1946, along with the report that a hard rain had damaged the Abiquiu house and showed her where she needed to level the floors and cover the walls against the coming winter. Maria was clearly disillusioned with Georgia, but she cared passionately about the historical house and was committed to the reconstruction.

Beaumont and Nancy. Benita Eisler describes the circumstances of Newhall's characterization of O'Keeffe's "malignant behavior" toward Norman and reports photographer Ansel Adams' written remark, "O'Keeffe is psychopathic" (Eisler, p. 480). Adams was no stranger to Georgia's volatile moods. A friend of Arthur and Phoebe Pack, he was a frequent guest at Ghost Ranch and saw her often there.

And even that. About Juan Hamilton's conviction that he was fated to take on Stieglitz's role, biographer Jeffrey Hogrefe writes in a caption under photographs of Stieglitz and Hamilton: "Juan Hamilton told people that he had been beckoned to care for Georgia O'Keeffe by the spirit of Alfred Stieglitz, a claim furthered by the close physical likeness between the two men" (Hogrefe, caption under plate 41). In *Weekends with O'Keeffe,* Carol Merrill also documents Hamilton's belief that he is under Stieglitz's direction: "He mentioned to me the possibility that he is reincarnated Stieglitz" (p. 41). Photographs reveal a compelling likeness, perhaps even more apparent to a person suffering from macular degeneration and unable to see clearly.



LEFT: Alfred Stieglitz Self-portrait, 1886, public domain. National Gallery of Art, Washington, D. C., online collection. RIGHT: Juan Hamilton, ©Jeffrey Hogrefe 1992, used with permission.

But until that. In the introduction to *Georgia O'Keeffe: A Portrait by Alfred Stieglitz,* O'Keeffe herself gives us a revealing glimpse into the painful cost of living and working for thirty years with a man who controlled her in every way he could.

> If [anyone] crossed him in any way his power to destroy was as destructive as his power to build—the extremes went together. I have experienced both and survived, but I think I only crossed him when I had to—to survive. For me he was much more wonderful in his work than as a human being. I believe it was the work that kept me with him—though I loved him as a human being. I could see his strengths and weaknesses. I put up with what seemed to me a good deal of contradictory nonsense because of what seemed clear and bright and wonderful (Stieglitz, introduction by Georgia O'Keeffe, n.p.).

Late in the year. The painting is reproduced in *Georgia O'Keeffe,* by Georgia O'Keeffe, pl. 86, with O'Keeffe's caption: "One morning the world . . ." The National Gallery of Art displays a reproduction on its website. Stieglitz gave the self-styled nickname to his penis as well, and wrote suggestive letters to Georgia's sister Ida, signing them "Old Crow Feather." The indelicate allusion was emphasized when he sent a photograph of the feather penetrating an apple, adding, "Ever jabbed into that reddest of round red apples" (Drohojowska-Philp, p. 225).

For starters. Robinson (p. 424) reports the $148,000 figure, almost two million dollars today. Hogrefe (p. 211) says that the family trust was valued at around $130,000. If the trust yielded an annual income of 3%, O'Keeffe would earn something like $4,000 a year (about $45,500 in today's dollars). Juan Hamilton told Jeffrey Hogrefe that she "laughed when she realized she had outlived those who had made a claim on the trust in the first place" (Hogrefe, p. 212).

But the larger. O'Keeffe's quotation: *Correspondence,* p. 396, Letter 13, February 12, 1947. Maria's reply: p. 397, Letter 15, February 17, 1947.

So, determined. O'Keeffe described the importance of her husband's collection (and her work on its distribution) in her long essay, "Stieglitz: His Pictures Collected Him," *New York Times Magazine* (December 11, 1949), pp. 24-30.

Stieglitz's photographs. See "The Key Set: 1902–1917" at the website of the National Gallery of Art.

But the most. Georgia's multi-year dispersal of her husband's collection was not entirely altruistic or selfless. Importantly, it kept her in touch with the top American curators—and (not incidentally) placed her in great demand, as museums competed with each other for parts of the collection. She must have been pleased by the attention, which gave her a high public visibility in the years when she wasn't painting or exhibiting.

My Faraway One, edited by Sarah Greenough, is the first volume compiled from the fifty thousand pages of material Georgia gave to Yale and sealed for twenty years after her death. It consists of 650 of the couple's several thousand letters, written between 1915 and 1933, as the terms of their relationship shifted dramatically. As Roxana Robinson notes, if Georgia didn't want anyone to read the letters, she could have burned them. Instead, she chose to deposit them in an archive that was restricted even from scholars for an extended period of time. Whether deliberate or not, her decision began at once to enhance and heighten the almost mythic nature of the O'Keeffe-Stieglitz relationship in the public mind. Robinson notes that the inaccessibility of the letters and their enigmatic possibilities contributed to the aura of remoteness and mystery that O'Keeffe was deliberately cultivating and which added to the value of her work (Robinson, p. 640).

While Georgia knows. For biographical facts about Doris Bry, see Drohojowska-Philp, p. 426 *passim.* Eisler (p. 481) relates the story of O'Keeffe's courting of Bry, whom she deliberately hired away from Norman. In New York, Doris would become as important to the artist as Maria had been in New Mexico. Her casting-off and replacement with Juan Hamilton, however, would be far more public—and publically humiliating for all concerned.

The replacement is painful. A sensation in the art world, the story was told and retold for nearly a decade. Bry's side of it was compellingly reported in *The Washington Post* in an article by JoAnn Lewis, "Doris Bry: The Legend of O'Keeffe," January 7, 1990. Bry's bitter remark about "wasted" years is taken from the article. She died in 2014.

But until then. Hunter Drohojowska-Philp interviewed Doris Bry in 1989. The quotations are from that interview (Drohojowska-Philp, p. 427). With regard to the letters Bry wrote in O'Keeffe's name and the work she did that O'Keeffe took full credit for, it can only be said that there is a pattern here. In *O'Keeffe and Stieglitz: An American Romance,* Benita Eisler observes that it was crucially important to O'Keeffe to maintain an image of competence in all things, but that someone else usually did the actual work. "Even the bread that Georgia told reverent visitors she made herself was usually baked by Maria or the kitchen help" (Eisler, p. 473). O'Keeffe also took full credit for the rebuilding of the Abiquiu house, mentioning Maria only on rare occasions and when she was pressed to do so, as in the oral history sessions in preparation for the house's Historic Landmark nomination.

In these early years. Norman was well-mannered in her for-the-record remarks about O'Keeffe. In her memoir, she writes that "O'Keeffe refuses to be called Mrs. Stieglitz, which mystifies me" (*Encounters,* p. 62). There are fourteen references to O'Keeffe in this book, all respectful.

About Dorothy, Georgia. Georgia's deprecatory remark is made in *Correspondence,* p. 407, Letter 28, March 23, 1947.

Georgia knows that. Georgia made the remark ("with a singular absence of tact," as one biographer puts it) in her June 22, 1947, letter to collector Albert Barnes (Drohojowska-Philp, p. 438). You can see an image of "White Canadian Barn II" in the Met's collection of Modern and Contemporary Art. The first in the series sold at Sotheby's for an estimated $1.5M-$2.5M.

But she perseveres. The quote is from Georgia's letter to William Howard Schubart, July 28, 1950 (Cowart, Hamilton, and Greenough, p. 253).

CHAPTER ELEVEN
MARIA: CHOICES

TIME AND PLACE

1946-1960: Abiquiu, Los Luceros

WHAT HAPPENS IN THIS CHAPTER

For Maria, these years are a time of balancing difficult choices. Her work on the Abiquiu house is often stalled because Georgia answers letters late or not at all, comes to New Mexico less frequently, and for shorter visits. There isn't sufficient time in the limited building season to resolve construction matters. Also, for Maria, the work brings up the unsettling question of how comfortably this expansive, expensive, all-modern house will fit into a primitive, poverty-stricken village whose residents cling to traditional practice. Living now on her own terms, Georgia seems to have become harder to please and more demanding. When the house is finished, her final payment for Maria's three years of monumental effort amounts to $100 a month plus a promise of the house itself as a bequest, which Maria knows better than to trust.

Maria's deeply rewarding work at Los Luceros, on the other hand, continues through the late 1950s. Her relationship with Dorothy also continues until Stewart's tragic death in 1955. Mary Wheelwright dies in 1958. Two years later, Maria sells Los Luceros—and faces an even more consequential choice.

FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION

1. When O'Keeffe sends her a check for $600, Maria returns it—but ends up accepting it. Why? Why is this such a difficult issue for these women? Have you ever found yourself in a similar uncomfortable situation? How did you deal with it?
2. Maria finds herself in charge of the local irrigation system—*majordoma* of the Los Luceros Ditch. What do you think she learned from this project? How might it have changed her as a person? As a member of the local community? Would you like to be responsible for something like this? Why? Why not?

3. Finiano's protest against the installation of the butane tank makes Maria feel an "uneasy ambivalence" about Georgia's house, which "obviously belongs to an Anglo *millonaria* who lives behind a wall" when the rest of the village lives in poverty. Do you feel that this is similar in any way to contemporary concerns raised by gentrification? Why? Why not?
4. Maria's experience of Doris Bry is not a happy one. Why? In what ways are the two women different? How are they similar?
5. In the 1950s, Maria experiences several substantial losses that challenge the life she's making for herself as the manager and Wheelwright's successor at Los Luceros. What are they? What impacts do they have on her present life? How does each affect her future choices? Her actions?

FOR FURTHER STUDY

If you would like to read about the ecological and social importance of the *acequia* to the traditional farms of the Southwest, Oliver LaFarge's *The Mother Ditch* (originally written for young readers) is an excellent place to start—readable, lively, interesting. And New Mexico Nomad's "Acequias," a 25-minute film on the collaborative community process of managing the ditch may help you appreciate some of the challenges Maria faced. Among her important personal achievements in these years were the friendships she formed with the men and women with whom she worked, on the *acequia* and on other projects.

You can see photos of the house in which Maria lived at Los Luceros on pp. 111-113 of Michael Wallis' excellent *Los Luceros,* as well as many photographs of the estate itself. But beware as you read: Wallis has adopted Lynes' unfortunate and faulty narrative about Maria's "bad behavior" toward O'Keeffe. There are two sides to that story; Maria's side is told in *Someone Always Nearby.*)

I wrote often. The story of Maria's father's lingering death is told in her letters of late 1946 and early 1947, along with hundreds of questions that needed to be resolved about the Abiquiu house—choices that Georgia usually left to Maria.

The issue of. Insulted at the amount Georgia has chosen to pay her, Maria documents her return of the usual $600 in *Correspondence,* p. 384, Letter 97, December 24, 1946. Please note that the editors have transcribed the amount of the check as $1,600. This is clearly an error, however, for in this same letter, Maria says caustically that she is returning "this well-intentioned six hundred bucks." And when she accepts "the goddam check" in her very next letter (p. 389, Letter 2, January 6, 1947), she again refers to the amount as $600: "I was up a tree the day your measly check came: it didn't meet my needs, and the hurry with which your letter was written—the barrenness of it—made me feel that $600 was an imposition."

Georgia returned. *Correspondence,* p. 387, Letter 1, January 2, 1947. The will she mentions was rewritten numerous times, and Maria was not included in the final version. The following letters do not mention this consequential disagreement about payment.

And so I did. The frustrating spring of 1947 (documented in Letters 1-56) ended with Georgia's late June return to New Mexico. The editorial note on *Correspondence* p. 425 summarizes the summer's activity. (Lynes' remark about Maria's "resentment" of visitors to the ranch is not supported by evidence in the published letters.) The summer letters are brief notes about construction and financial business, and the two women ended the year on good terms. When Georgia telegraphed that she had returned safely to New York, she signed it "Love, Georgia" (p. 428, Letter 64, December 17, 1947). The same day, Maria writes that Georgia's departure had left her with an "almighty ache." She hoped Georgia would come back, "a long old hope—with a sharp edge" (p. 429, Letter 65, December 17, 1947).

But we muddled. In a note on p. 432 of the *Correspondence*, the editors summarize Maria's December 26, 1947, account of expenses from March 13, 1946, to December 1, 1947. The Abiquiu house was not a low-budget construction project. Georgia deposited a total of $27,400 in the Santa Fe bank. The expenses for two seasons of work (1946 and 1947) amounted to $28,303.22 (the equivalent of about $376,000 today). Maria made up the difference, calculating that Georgia owed her $1,903.19. This amount did not include any payment to her.

While all this. Maria summarizes her spring farm work in *Correspondence,* p. 412, Letter 36, May 1, 1947. She also reports that Mr. Bode has agreed to supply electricity to the Abiquiu house for $12 a month, and that she is installing a large butane tank on the property. She ends the letter on an exuberant note, urging Georgia to finish her work in New York, "then come and do something about this waiting and wonderful good world."

I had persuaded. Maria writes about the grapes in *Correspondence,* p. 312, Letter 9, February 18, 1946, as well as the grapevine trellises and apricots and willow tree she is planting for Georgia. In a number of letters, Maria reports that she is buying for both the large orchards and vineyard at Los Luceros and the smaller plantings at Abiquiu. Whether Mary Wheelwright is unwittingly paying for the plants that go to Abiquiu is never made clear, but it looks as if that might be the case. There is no indication in the letters that Maria ever told Wheelwright about her work on the Abiquiu house.

Katherine Boles' video presentation, "Cultural Landscape Study of O'Keeffe's Abiquiú Property" (mentioned earlier) offers a detailed review of Maria's planting of the Abiquiu garden.

I recommended. Maria Martinez's pottery is internationally famous. You can read about her and see photographs at "Maria Martinez," on the website of the Smithsonian American Art Museum. A video with a focus on the way the pots were produced and fired is also available, at Maria Martinez: Indian Pottery of San Ildefonso. Martinez was among the artists whose work was supported by the Santa Fe Indian Market that Maria Chabot organized in the mid-1930s. The two women had been friends since that time. You may occasionally see examples of Martinez highly-prized blackware on the Antiques Roadshow. Still the best book-length study: ethnographer Alice Marriott's unique biography of the artist and the Pueblo woman: *Maria: The Potter of San Ildefonso* (1948). It also provides an excellent picture of pueblo life in the post-war era, when Maria Chabot was a frequent visitor there.

I was at the ranch. Maria recalled the story for one of O'Keeffe's biographers. "Rodakiewicz showed up in the Rolls roadster . . . with a woman. O'Keeffe yelled at him, 'Nobody comes to work with a woman!'" (Drohojowska-Philp**,** pp. 430-431). She had to be cajoled to participate in the scheduled filming.

But since I didn't. Chabot's published articles on Indian arts and crafts written in the 1930s are available in the O'Keeffe Archive: Research and writing, 1891-2001, undated. Maria Chabot Papers, 3.

But the way. Maria's remark about compensation: *Correspondence,* pp. 436-437, Letter 3, January 12, 1948.

At Los Luceros. Maria mentions the field pea seed, as well as five hundred fruit trees and the lettuce field in her letter of February 25, 1948 (*Correspondence,* p. 444). The comment about the turkey appears in Letter 25, March 13, 1948 (pp. 449-450), and the remark about the bacon in Letter 29, March 17, 1948 (pp. 452-453). Maria obviously had energy to spare.

But there were. Maria describes the scene: *Correspondence,* p. 461, Letter 40, April 1, 1948.

My life got. One of Maria's signal achievements during her custody of Los Luceros was the rehabilitation of the vital *Acequia Madre* (the mother ditch, also known as the Los Luceros or Alcalde Ditch). Originally called Sebastián Martín's Ditch, it was dug in the 1700s by Indians from the nearby San Juan Pueblo, who were given a parcel of land in return for their labor. It irrigated Martín's large apple orchard, cornfield, and a garden of chile and onions (Wallis, p. 44). Mary Wheelwright had made little attempt at maintenance during her years at Los Luceros, and when Maria took charge, there was a great deal of long-deferred maintenance to be done. With her customary self-confidence and panache, she organized the *parciantes* to do the necessary work. And then she rolled up her sleeves, grabbed a shovel, and dug in beside them, earning their respect—and likely their amazement. The men of that time and place were not accustomed to *gringas* who seemed to enjoy labor. Maria describes her work on the ditch in the letters of March and April, 1948.

Carlyn Stewart provides an interesting description and several photos of the Los Luceros ditch in "The Acequia Madre: Connections to nature and people through time." You can see a detailed map on the Mapcarta website.

The work was. Maria's remarkable industry and management abilities are manifestly evident in Letter 38 (p. 414, May 5, 1947), where she describes cutting aspen *vigas* for Georgia's house in the mountains, harvesting willows with Indian helpers along the Rio Grande, and managing the continuing construction of the house itself (roof, pipes, concrete floors, water pump, doors). She's ready to put "that job" (the house) behind her, she writes, in the same way that she knows Georgia wants to finish the "Stieglitz job." "I wonder if you really do want that house or not," she muses at the end, philosophically. "I am always uncertain about that." It is a remarkable letter, written by a young woman who has come of age through a difficult task.

But we were facing. Maria explains the quit-claim deed in Letter 51 (*Correspondence,* April 18, 1948, pp. 468-469). She introduces the tale of Finiano and his chickens in Letter 39 (March 31, 1948, pp. 459-460) and continues it in letters written over the next two months. In Alice Marriott's fine biography of Maria Martinez, there is a telling description of the difficult and painful predicament the Indians found themselves in during the 1930s and 1940s:

> The whites steadily encroached on the country around the villages. The newcomers stripped trees from the watersheds to produce lumber and floods; plowed up the earth to raise grain crops and sandstorms; and turned a vast section of the Southwest, hitherto fertile enough for at least a subsistence economy, into outright desert (Marriott, 1948, p. xviii).

A Native opposition to Anglo invaders something like Finiano's is the subject of the movie, *The Milagro Beanfield Wars,* based on the novel by John Nichols. Finiano and his chickens could have been characters in that film—or in one of Nichols' fictional trilogy about life in Northern New Mexico during the mid-twentieth century: *The Milagro Beanfield War, The Magic Journey,* and *Nirvana Blues.*

The story stayed. The Taos Indian's rebuke of wealthy Mabel Dodge Luhan is described in Rebecca Panovka's book review, "The Strange Revival of Mabel Dodge Luhan," in *The New Yorker,* June 21, 2021. The difference between Dodge Luhan's wealth and their poverty was not lost on the dwellers of the Taos Pueblo. Something of the same resentment against O'Keeffe may have simmered beneath the surface in Abiquiu.

The tale of Finiano's hens. It is difficult to overstate Abiquiu's extreme poverty, which had been exacerbated by the drought of the 1930s, as well as by Depression and war. Things looked up when Los Alamos began hiring construction and maintenance workers, but most villagers were still dirt-poor. Nothing much had changed since the situation Benita Eisler describes in dismal terms in her book, *O'Keefe and Stieglitz: A Romance*:

> Abiquiu in the 1930s was an impoverished Hispano-Indian hamlet whose population of fewer than five hundred souls eked out a miserable living as subsistence farmers and shepherds. Once a center of the outlawed Penitente sect, the town itself consisted of several abandoned moradas, a run-down church dedicated to St. Tomas, two bars, and the ramshackle adobe dwellings of the inhabitants (Eisler, p. 471).

Aside from the addition of O'Keeffe's house, another half-century made almost no difference in the appearance of the village. In an endnote, Eisler adds:

> When [I] first visited Abiquiu in 1986, the town appeared to have changed little since the 1930s: from the gaping window of an abandoned house, a torn mattress oozed stuffing into the tiny square. The only improvement was a hangerlike structure faced with aluminum siding. Used as a social hall by the local kids, it was contributed by O'Keeffe in the 1950s after considerable arm-twisting by the local priest. In 1989, when the O'Keeffe compound became the offices of the foundation bearing the artist's name, dramatic beautification of all visible parts of the village took place (Eisler, p. 519, n. 11).

Hogrefe reports that O'Keeffe stopped payment on the social hall/gymnasium because she feuded with the contractor; Arthur Pack covered her unpaid balance. Unlike other villagers, O'Keeffe had indoor plumbing, drove more than one automobile, and had the first residential telephone. Others lived a far more primitive life, with outhouses instead of bathrooms, kerosene lanterns for light, and wood for fuel brought down from the mountain by burros (Hogrefe, pp. 213-214). Hogrefe goes on to say that O'Keeffe didn't just own a house; she was considered an "overlord," a "patron of the pueblo."

But as we began. Maria expended a great deal of effort to locate and use traditional native materials for walls and ceilings. She addresses the issue of compromise in Letter 44 (*Correspondence,* May 19, 1947, pp. 417-418), where she brings up her growing uneasiness. The native elements are "sort of a sham," she writes, "or else the modernism is really a farce." In the Historic Landmark Nomination, Burt describes this compromise realistically:

> Architecturally, O'Keeffe's Abiquiu residence is a complicated overlay of periods and styles. The house combines elements from the Spanish vernacular courtyard house of northern New Mexico and from mid-twentieth-century domestic modernism, resulting in an idiosyncratic architectural creation . . . A respect for these historic features notwithstanding, O'Keeffe and Chabot's changes to the traditional structure to make the house more livable and suited to O'Keeffe's specific needs could only be called "modern." With certain changes, O'Keeffe followed progressive architectural tendencies of the period: she opened up the interior space to make it more functional, assigned public and private activities to specific sections of the house, and planned the placement of large windows to frame dramatic views of the landscape and to bring natural light into the interiors (Burt, pp. 5-6).

Burt credits O'Keeffe with the modern adaptations. The letters, however, reveal that almost all were based on Chabot's understanding of the way O'Keeffe lived and worked and on her own diligent research into modern construction features and materials. When O'Keeffe approved her requests for decisions (and often when she failed to reply), Maria forged ahead, keeping the enormously complicated project on schedule. You can read an extended documentation of the work in Burt's National Historic Landmark Nomination Form (mentioned earlier). Barbara Lynes' heavily detailed and generously illustrated *Georgia O'Keeffe and Her Houses: Abiquiu and Ghost Ranch* provides a room-by-room discussion of the entire house. There are photos on the O'Keeffe museum website. Google will help you find many more on the internet.

Maria's ambivalence about the modernization of this historic native adobe hacienda seems to have been heightened by the fact that at some point in their early-1940s discussions, she and Georgia had fantasized about living the "hogan-life" in a "truly native" dwelling with no electricity, no running water, and no conveniences. With this in mind, Maria's move toward the modern must seem to her to be a necessary but nonetheless difficult compromise. In her letters, Georgia continues to assert her desire for the hogan-life; for instance, in Letter 22 (*Correspondence,* pp. 402-403, March 8, 1947), where she says she is "more and more hogan-minded." Her description of that way of life, however, appears to require someone (a "slave," perhaps) who manages the cooking, laundry, and other household work—out of sight.

And it wasn't the first. The Maria-Doris episode began in 1947 and continued into 1948. I think we can understand why Maria, who was putting a great deal of time, energy, and know-how into the building of the Abiquiu house and garden, may have been irritated when Doris attempted to tell her what to do and how to do it. Obviously, the two competitive young women—one a highly-educated and cultured New Yorker, the other a rough-and-ready self-taught Texan—found plenty to disagree about.

So yes, it's true. In her usual fashion, Maria addresses this issue head on. The quote is from Letter 30 (*Correspondence,* p. 453, March 18, 1948). She mentions the problem with Doris' raspberries in Letter 39 (pp. 460-461), March 31, 1948. By December, Maria had put enough distance on the matter to apologize to Georgia for her rudeness—her final reversion, in the published letters, to her former habit of abject apology for real or fancied transgressions. All mentions of Doris in Maria's 1949 letters are quite warm, perhaps to convince O'Keeffe that there was no ill feeling.

Unfortunately, *Correspondence* editor Barbara Lynes chooses to expand these *contretemps* into reasons for her assertion that O'Keeffe once again exiled Chabot. While O'Keeffe herself may have claimed later in her life to have done this, there is no documentation for it in the letters or in other contemporaneous documents. Even more unfortunately, Lynes' insistence on a relationship repeatedly broken by Maria's misbehaviors have colored interpretations by other writers who have not read the letters closely. One example (but only one—there are several others): Michael Wallis' incorrect claim that the letters themselves show that O'Keeffe ordered Chabot to leave the Abiquiu house (Wallis, p. 138). They don't.

After I had handed the keys. C.S. Merrill mentions the telephone booth with the bring-your-own-bulb in *Weekends with O'Keeffe,* p. 90. When Georgia's friend Todd Webb came to see her in 1957, he got as far as Española, tried to telephone her, and had to send a card, since she still didn't have a phone. "At least, she said she didn't," one biographer remarks. "It turned out that she secretly kept a telephone but refused to give the number to any but her closest companions and workers. Her reputation as a recluse thus remained intact" (Drohojowska-Philp, pp. 459-460).

We didn't actually. There is no documentation in the Chabot-O'Keeffe correspondence of additional payments for Maria's work on the house. (Some of Maria's letters to Georgia have been damaged or lost, but she seems to have carefully preserved all of Georgia's letters to her.) In *Full Bloom,* Drohojowska-Philp observes that if O'Keeffe ever actually made a legacy provision of any kind for Chabot, it was no longer in the will when the artist died (p. 420).

Illness and loss. According to one of her caregivers, O'Keeffe preferred to wear kimonos in later life because they disguised her 1955 mastectomy, which she did not make public (Drohojowska-Philp, p. 543). This would have been her third breast surgery, the first two taking place in the early 1930s (Eisler, p. 363, p. 369). Georgia's remark about her New York friends is quoted in Robinson, p. 645.

And worse for me. The narrative in these paragraphs is drawn from pages in Binder 137, Maria Chabot's writing on Dorothy Stewart, 1939-1956. Maria Chabot Papers, 4. Georgia O'Keeffe Museum "Duskin Doorknob" and "Toad of My Heart" are among the several playfully affectionate names Maria used in her letters to Dorothy. "Duskin" is a Lithuanian Jewish name that may be derived from Dusha, a nickname for Dorothy.

My time at Los Luceros. Michael Wallis notes that through the decade of the 1950s, Mary Wheelwright was severely financially overextended and both unwilling and unable to invest the money necessary to properly maintain Los Luceros. "Chabot's willingness to do the hard work that had to be done sustained [her] during the ten more years she managed Los Luceros, but it did not pay the bills" (Wallis, p. 138). He adds:

> Chabot carried on. She took out bank loans, sold off cattle, and leased pastures for alfalfa. When major flooding from the Rio Grande threatened Los Luceros, Chabot, with her arm in a cast after an accident, rounded up twenty men to sandbag the Casa Grande, move the furniture and rolled-up rugs from the first floor to the second, and take all the tractors and machinery to higher ground" (Wallis, p. 139).

But when Mary unexpectedly. Wallis describes the new property disposition on p. 142 of *Los Luceros.*

It was a jolt. The sale of her part of Los Luceros land brought Maria what amounts to $671,000 in today's money. That money and money from the sale of the the property that Dorothy had left her must have given her many options.

CHAPTER TWELVE
MARIA: CHANGING WOMEN

TIME AND PLACE

1960-1986. Ghost Ranch, Abiquiu, Albuquerque.

WHAT HAPPENS IN THIS CHAPTER

Maria's marriage to Dana Bailey lasts less than a year. After the divorce, she and her mother move to Albuquerque, but she keeps in frequent touch with Georgia. O'Keeffe becomes a world traveler, but in the mid-1960s, she begins to suffer the macular degeneration that will rob her of her eyesight within a few years. In the spring of 1973, 28-year-old Juan Hamilton becomes her hired man, then secretary, and finally agent, replacing Doris Bry. Georgia becomes more remote and inaccessible to her family and friends. Maria visits her for the last time in 1981. In 1983, Hamilton purchases an extensive estate on the outskirts of Santa Fe, where O'Keeffe lives until her death in 1986.

FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION

1. Were you surprised by Maria's announcement of her marriage? Why or why not? How might the losses of the 1950s have moved her to make this major change in the direction of her life? Were you surprised when the marriage didn't work? By the reasons Maria gave for the divorce?
2. How did life change for Georgia after she settled in New Mexico in 1949? What was her next important life event?
3. John Poling (and others) felt that O'Keeffe's failure to acknowledge his assistance raised some troubling questions. Do you agree with him? Do you think an artist should acknowledge assisted work? Why do you think Georgia refused to do that? Do you see any patterns here?

FOR FURTHER STUDY

In the novel, the story of Maria's later life is sketched in bare detail. There is as yet no published biography, but if you're curious about her, there is much additional archived material to be explored, for she left a rich legacy of letters and other materials. You can get a glimpse of the scope by visiting the excellent archive website for the Maria Chabot Papers in the Georgia O'Keeffe Museum. Click on the links in the "Collection Organization" menu on that page to see how the material has been compiled and what is available. Many items are accessible via online request forms, and the archivists are unfailingly helpful.

Dear Dana. Maria Chabot to Dana Bailey correspondence, 1961-1962. Box: 20, Folder: 2

Dana and I had met. Dana Kavanaugh Bailey graduated from the University of Arizona in 1937, with a degree in Astronomy. He won a Rhodes Scholarship and studied astrophysics at Oxford in the years before the war.

Dana Kavanaugh Bailey, about 1937, when he and Maria met.

Maria (who had been traveling through Europe with Dorothy Stewart) was at Oxford for the summer of 1938, where her interest in the management of indigenous arts apparently prompted her to attend a summer course for British colonial administrators. (Her attendance at this course is documented in letters to her mother during this period.) Her cousin, Cresson Kearney, also a Rhodes Scholar, was there at the same time and likely introduced Maria and Dana. (Cresson added a note to Maria at the end of one of Dana's letters to her.)

At the end of the summer of 1938, Maria and Dorothy returned to the United States. The next year, Dana joined the Antarctic Service Expedition. This was an important opportunity for a young astrophysicist at the beginning of his career. He went on to many professional achievements, some of them reported in the Dana K. Baily resume on the website of the National Institute of Standards and Technology.

Maria and Dana corresponded briefly in the late 1930s but lost touch during the war, becoming reacquainted two decades later. The archive contains two 1938 letters from Dana to Maria, both written from Oxford. The first, in September, is ten pages, handwritten, about his travels in a Europe already at war. It is signed "As ever." The second, in October, remarks that he has not heard from her, although Cresson has told him she has written. In the archive file (Maria Chabot to Dana Bailey correspondence, 1961-1962 Box: 20, Folder: 2) there are eight 1960-1962 notes, letters, and a postcard. In the first (March 26, 1960), Dana writes that he is working in Washington D.C. but is preparing to move to the house on Bluebell Avenue in the Chautauqua neighborhood in Boulder, Colorado, where he will be working for the National Bureau of Standards. He mentions tables Maria sent for the house, so by this time (eleven months before their wedding) they had apparently already agreed to marry. Other letters confirm that this was a planned marriage, not entered into impulsively. He signs the letter, "Love, Dana."

And so we married. The tale of the marriage, honeymoon trip, separation, and relatively amicable divorce has been pieced together from correspondence, notes, and other documents through 1961 and into 1962, held in the "Marriage to Dana Bailey" section of the Chabot papers. Maria's revealing letter to Dr. Ross is dated November 15, 1961. (Marriage to Dana Bailey, 1938-1962, undated. Maria Chabot Papers, 1.6. Maria's letters to Dana's mother, Dorothy Kavanaugh Bailey, are also in the collection: Dorothy Kavanaugh Bailey, 1960-1962. Maria Chabot Papers, 1.6.

That experiment ended. For over four decades, Erna Fergusson wrote about the culture and history of New Mexico. Maria would have known her through her touring company, Koshare Tours, which set up tours of the pueblos, desert, and mountains of the state. It was purchased by Fred Harvey, who hired Fergusson to direct the new venture, retitled called Indian Detour Service. Fergusson's first book, *Dancing Gods* (1931), was about Indian ceremonies; she went on to write another dozen books about New Mexico and the Southwest. The best biography is *Beautiful Swift Fox: Erna Fergusson and the Modern Southwest,* by Robert Franklin Gish. Olive Chabot lived with her daughter from around 1964 until her death, February 27, 1975. Maria continued to live in the Veranda Road house until the last few years of her life, when she moved to the Monzano del sol Village.

And O'Keeffe? In an editorial comment at the conclusion of the Chabot-O'Keeffe correspondence, Barbara Lynes claims that the O'Keeffe-Chabot friendship "ended dramatically" in the fall of 1949 and that outside of a few cards or brief visits, the relationship had become "untenable" (*Correspondence,* p. 515).

This is clearly not the case. Maria was fully engaged in her work at Los Luceros, and after that, with activities in Santa Fe, and (later) in Albuquerque. Georgia felt free to call on Maria when she wanted her friend's help, as she did in 1964, for a redesign of the kitchen and breakfast areas of the Ghost Ranch house—hardly a project for two women whose relationship was "untenable." Lynes herself reports:

> O'Keeffe hired Chabot to oversee aspects of major renovations she made to the house that year [1964]. Chabot kept records of changes she made to the kitchen and breakfast room, which included the installation of new plumbing, a dishwasher, new cabinets on the north kitchen wall, and large glass windows in the kitchen and breakfast room (Lynes 2012, p. 63).

Georgia traveled frequently through the 1950s and 1960s and was absent for months at a time. Still, she and Chabot visited when both were available and (after Georgia's telephone was installed) talked on the telephone. It is true that Georgia occasionally spoke slightingly and ungraciously of Maria in later years, as she did of almost all the old friends from whom she increasingly distanced herself. As biographer Benita Eisler remarks, she was in the habit of dropping old friends completely, especially if they needed something from her (Eisler, p. 484). And after Hamilton arrived, the few that remained loyal (Maria among them) were unceremoniously cut off, and telephone messages, letters, and Christmas cards were not returned. O'Keeffe could no longer review her mail herself—did Hamilton withhold pieces from her? Or did she herself simply decide to cut off all ties? Old friends blamed Hamilton, but there was no evidence (Eisler, p. 490).

Calvin Tomkins' remark about O'Keeffe's "typical" habit of making demands on people is quoted in Drohojowska-Philp, p. 519.

Georgia might be settled. For a review of O'Keeffe's activities from her return to New Mexico in 1949 through Hamilton's arrival in 1973, see Robinson, pp. 636-693 and Drohojowska-Philp, pp. 423-509. Hogrefe tells the story of O'Keeffe's driving trip to Mexico with Spud Johnson and (in a separate car) Elliot and Aline Porter. O'Keeffe was so unpleasant to the Porters that they dropped out of the little caravan in Mexico City, leaving Johnson and O'Keeffe to motor on alone (Hogrefe, pp. 221-222). When friends told her they were going to Morocco, she hinted broadly that it was a place she had always wanted to visit. When they invited her to go with them, she agreed, adding that she would bring Juan. "You know, for packing and carrying" (Drohojowska-Philp, p. 514).

But she also became. Phoebe Pack's comment is reported by Hogrefe, p. 195. Laurie Lisle describes her difficulties with the O'Keeffe biography in *Word for Word: A Writer's Life*. There, she mentions that Doris Bry also planned a book about O'Keeffe (p. 149), but that project had been thwarted by Juan Hamilton, who seemed at that time to have writing plans of his own. After uncomfortable and even "challenging" encounters with Hamilton and some of his friends at the Ghost Ranch conference center where she was staying, Lisle discovered that her notebook had been stolen from her room. She reflects:

> Even though I had already transferred their contents to index cards, I was alarmed: it would be impossible to write the biography in an atmosphere of suspicion, hostility, and even danger in New Mexico (Lisle, 2021, p. 166).

I wasn't the only. Robinson (p. 721) speculates that Hamilton might also have had something to do with O'Keeffe's abrupt dismissal of Barbara Rose, as he had with Lisle and other would-be writers. Pollitzer's is a sadder case, for Anita had dedicated years to creating a tribute to her friend and was devastated by the rejection (Drohojowska-Philp, p. 499). O'Keeffe had crafted an image of herself that was remote, mysterious, and demanding. She rejected her friend's "sentimental" characterization and wrote that she could not permit her name to be "exploited" to further it. "You speak of friendship," she wrote, "but it is not the act of a friend to insist on publishing what you call my biography when I feel so deeply that it is unacceptable" (quoted in Robinson, p. 677). The Pollitzer family published the book, *A Woman on Paper,* after both Pollitzer and O'Keeffe had died. The "glowing" review has the (perhaps unconsciously) ironic title: "The Memoir of a Legendary Friendship" (Bundeson, p. 11).

I've seen it reported. Hogrefe places the beginning of O'Keeffe's vision problems in 1964, based on the story told to him by Peggy Kiskadden, to whom a panicked Georgia first blurted out the news (Hogrefe, pp. 229-230). If that is the case, she would have been seventy-seven years old. According to the timeline compiled by the American Macular Degeneration Foundation, the average time from onset to total vision loss is ten years. By the time Hamilton appears at Ghost Ranch (1973), she is likely functionally blind.

But there was no stopping. This scene is based on Maria's 1987 interview with Drohojowska-Philp (p. 689).

One of these. In 1976, when he served as a studio assistant for O'Keeffe, John Poling was between terms at the University of New Mexico. The son of a Presbyterian minister, he would go on to earn a doctorate and become a professor of philosophy at St. Olaf College. He describes his work with O'Keeffe in fascinating detail in his memoir, *Painting with O'Keeffe,* and in an interview with Hope Aldrich in the *Santa Fe Reporter* ("Art Assist: Where is Credit Due?" July 31, 1978, vol. 7, no. 6). In the memoir, he says that O'Keeffe gave him the autographed postcard when they completed "A Day with Juan" (Poling, p. 77). He worked with the artist on two more paintings, until Hamilton accused him of not finishing the window-trim painting he had been hired to do and fired him, with O'Keeffe's muted acquiescence. His account of the firing episode (pp. 86-90) reveals a great deal about the dynamics involved in the O'Keeffe-Hamilton relationship. He was subsequently asked to return, but the earlier closeness he had felt with the artist had disappeared, and after some weeks he was abruptly dismissed (pp. 104-105). According to Drohojowska-Philp (p. 523), O'Keeffe continued to work on versions of "A Day with Juan" with her newly promoted gardener, Benlarmino Lopez. One of this series of assisted paintings (the brushwork of either Poling or Lopez) is reported to have recently been sold for over $2.4 million at auction.

John Poling's assistance. Poling went public with his story of painting for O'Keeffe in 1978, after he saw a photograph of one of his canvases in an article by Mary Lynn Kotz in *ARTnews* (December 1977, vol. 76, no. 10, pp. 37-45). He was deeply disturbed when the accompanying article made no mention of the collaboration that had been necessary because of O'Keeffe's impairment. He was not seeking the recognition but felt that it was fundamentally dishonest to attribute the work solely to her. "It struck me that dealers, agents, museums, private owners, and the viewing public at large all would want to know which paintings O'Keeffe had executed by herself and which ones she had not," he writes in his memoir (p. 108). "But more important," he adds bluntly, "was the simple matter of the truth."

After a long quandary about the grave ethical implications of what he now saw as a deliberate deception, Poling attempted to discuss his concerns with the artist. In *Painting with O'Keeffe,* he describes his attempt to learn from her why she was concealing his assistance on her work and how they might make a public announcement of what he had discovered. She told him the matter was none of his business, angrily accused him of being "after something" for himself, and sent him to talk to Juan Hamilton about it. That discussion was fruitless, so (at the suggestion of another New Mexico artist, Jim Harrill) Poling met with *Santa Fe Reporter* journalist Hope Aldrich. She was "extraordinarily careful in researching the story," he writes. They all understood that this was—to say the least—a difficult subject. Poling was concerned about O'Keeffe's feelings. Aldrich and the newspaper would have been concerned about defamation.

On July 31, 1978, the *Reporter* published two articles by Aldrich based on interviews with Poling, O'Keeffe, Hamilton, museum directors, and gallery owners. One title explicitly foregrounds the persistent issue of O'Keeffe's taking credit for work done by others—but this time, in the context of painting: "Art Assist: Where is Credit Due?" with the subtitle, "O'Keeffe Refusal to Admit Aid Raises Questions in Art World" (Poling, pp. 140-148). Aldrich quotes O'Keeffe's claim that Poling was nothing more than a "palette knife"—a mechanical tool an artist uses to get the work done. With that dismissive remark, one biographer observes drily, "Poling joined the legions of discarded employees who had thought themselves friends of Miss O'Keeffe's" (Drohojowska-Philp, p. 523).

That same issue of the *Reporter* also contained Aldrich's second article, "Truth Vital, Experts Say" (reprinted in Poling's memoir, pp. 136-139). All applauded O'Keeffe's desire to keep painting and saw no problems with the use of assistants. But there was a general consensus that artists should acknowledge that help to the public. "You can be the designer of a painting, but you're not the artist if you didn't paint it," one gallery owner said flatly. Another dealer pointed out that an O'Keeffe collaboration would have only one-tenth the value of an original, solely-executed work. All agreed that today's art market values originality "as never before in the history of art" (Poling, 136-139).

Jackie Suazo's situation may seem similar but was more a matter of the much later inadvertent confusion of unsigned work. Suazo was an Abiquiu teenager who was befriended by O'Keefe—"my darling," she called him, according to Eisler (p. 485). From around 1950-1953, Suazo lived in the Abiquiu house, where she taught him watercolor and the two painted together. (See also Chapter Six, key phrase ***All these men.***) Years later, he attempted unsuccessfully to retrieve his paintings (some one hundred of them). "I tried going over there, but they would never let me in," he said. "I didn't know whether my paintings were even still there or they had thrown them away." In 2000, however, some of what he believed to be his works surfaced among twenty-eight watercolors in the "Canyon Suite" in the Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art. Suazo filed a copyright claim to three of the watercolors.

All the paintings in the suite were first thought to have been done around 1917, when O'Keeffe was teaching in Canyon, Texas. But when the paper was tested, it was found to be from the 1930s. The dealer refunded the $5 million that the museum had paid and asserted that the paintings would not be resold. There was no explanation for the inclusion of the pictures that Suazo claimed as his. They were among the 250 items excluded from the official O'Keeffe catalog of some 2,000 works ("28 O'Keeffe Paintings in Doubt as Experts Challenge Authenticity," *Los Angeles Times,* March 12, 2000.

My last visit. Barbara Lynes quotes Georgia's letter (*Correspondence,* p. 515) as yet another evidence of her rejection of Maria's friendship. It is just as likely that Hamilton typed and signed the letter for Georgia, who might not have known anything about it.

My conclusion was bolstered. **Carol** Merrill writes (*Weekends with O'Keeffe,* p. 59) that she and Maria met in a Tai Chi class in Albuquerque. When Georgia asked how Maria was doing in the class, Merrill reports that she was "perseverant, and she laughed a lot." O'Keeffe replied that Maria had a "great sense of humor until she wanted to possess you" and that she hadn't wanted anyone "even looking at" Georgia's house—an obvious misrepresentation of the events of the 1940s. Merrill's description of O'Keeffe's abrupt last goodbye—"Let's get this over with"—appears in *Weekends,* p. 229.

Carol grieved. The exchange in the park is fictional, based on Merrill's "Afterword." It was time to leave, she says, because "I was beginning to behave like her, dress like her, gesture like her. I was losing myself and really needed to get on with my life and be thoroughly myself" (p. 231).

I wasn't the only one. Robinson writes that Hamilton had long ago established control over O'Keeffe's private life. He threatened her relationship with her sister Claudia and destroyed her friendships with Peggy Kiskadden and Frances O'Brien (Robinson, pp. 710-711). After this event, Drohojowska-Philp writes, Kiskadden sent a conciliatory note to O'Keeffe. It was soundly rejected.

> To her friend of some forty years, O'Keeffe wrote, "I am astonished to find from your letter that you would think that I would wish to visit you or even wish to speak with you . . . So there we are. Finished!" (p. 527).

It is an unpleasant echo of "Let's get this over with."

So, too, Frances O'Brien. See Robinson, p. 711.

They were right. In 1989, biographer Benita Eisler discovered the sentences, "Art is wicked. It is who we are," written in O'Keeffe's familiar script and enclosed in quotation marks, in the collection of papers the artist sent to the Beinecke Library. She uses them in the conclusion to *O'Keeffe and Stieglitz: An American Romance* (p. 494). The two sentences are usually attributed to O'Keeffe, but since the artist appears to have quoted them, on an envelope that contained letters written by Stieglitz, they are more likely his words. They are an acknowledgement that Stieglitz himself could certainly have made. For better and worse, both he and O'Keeffe put their art and themselves as artists above everything. Above friendships, above family, even above each other. That kind of art might very well be called wicked.

I made several. The exclusion of O'Keefe's old friends and family apparently began as early as 1980, according to Robinson, who attributes it to Hamilton's proprietary sense. Increasing deafness further isolated the artist, and the 1983 move to *Sol y Sombra* (Spanish for *sun* and *shade*) closed her off. She was now entirely dependent on Juan, who hired and fired the caregivers and managed access to O'Keeffe. Robinson (p. 724) mentions that Georgia's favorite grand-nephew, Raymond Kruger, was turned away, among other family and friends. Hogrefe (p. 316) reports that Hamilton purchased the estate (then the most expensive house in Santa Fe) for more than three million dollars. It was recently listed for sale for more than twenty-two million.

And there was Christine. Christine Taylor Patten's *Miss O'Keeffe* (published in 1992) provides an eye-witness testimony to the two years before O'Keeffe's death. Patten left, she says, in 1984, after a series of disagreements that ended when Hamilton grabbed her abdomen, squeezed, and said, "Back to the gym" (Patten, p. 175). When she confronted him about the attack the next day, he denied it. Patten resigned. "I told [Miss O'Keeffe] I would come back and visit with her if I were allowed to return," she writes. "Hamilton started laughing. 'Do you think I'd let you back in the house after this?' He said, 'You'll never see her again'" (p. 179).

The reason? "She was still with me" is quoted from Patten, p. 197. Patten's unusual book is valuable because it contains both her first-person, on-the-scene, highly subjective observations of what was clearly a difficult situation for the entire household and the more objective third-person voice of her friend, Alvaro Cardona-Hine (1926-2016). Cardona-Hine was a widely respected New Mexico painter, composer, and poet who had followed O'Keeffe's career for decades. He brought context and a poet's eye and ear to Patten's story.

Yes, I thought. Lynes quotes O'Keeffe's inscription in Maria's book on p. 515 of the *Correspondence.*

AFTER

TIME AND PLACE

1973-1987, New Mexico and New York

WHAT HAPPENS IN THIS SECTION

This is the story of the thirteen years of Juan Hamilton's tenure as Georgia's hired man and "someone always nearby," from his entry into Georgia's life to her death and the litigation of her estate. Also: the last chapter of Maria's story and the publication of her correspondence with Georgia.

FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION

Susan Albert says: "For several years, I thought hard about how to tell the story of O'Keeffe's life with John Bruce (Juan) Hamilton, the *someone always nearby* of her last thirteen years. Georgia's story, as I understood it, wouldn't be complete without this final chapter. But it was Hamilton's story, too, and he was still living—and is, as I write this today. I am reluctant to make a fictional character of a living person; it seems to me an invasion of privacy. So, after long thought, I decided to tell this part of the story not in fictional form but as nonfiction, entirely on the basis of publicly-known facts. With this in mind, here are some questions for you to consider.

1. Juan Hamilton entered Georgia's story in 1973. In this section of *Someone Always Nearby*, the author presents him primarily as a nonfiction character, relying on published, fact-based reports of biographers and journalists and staying within the context of their presentations. What kind of added value might there be if she had presented Juan Hamilton as fully imagined, as she did with Maria and Georgia, who now belong to the historic past?
2. Albert says that she isn't comfortable fictionalizing living people because of privacy issues. Do you think this is a valid reason for treating Hamilton's part of O'Keeffe's story as nonfiction and reporting only what other sources have reported? What other reasons

do you think she might have had? What challenges do writers of fiction face when they write about real people?

3. Do you think this last section contributes enough to the overall story to make it worth including, or should the tale have ended with the deaths of Georgia and Maria? Why? Why not?
4. O'Keeffe remarked, "All the men artists can have young women, but people think it's shocking that I might have a young man in my life." Who might be shocked? Why? After reading *Someone Always Nearby*, does it seem shocking to you, that O'Keeffe would become emotionally involved with a man 58 years her junior?

FOR FURTHER STUDY

Four biographers (Robinson, Drohojowska-Philp, Hogrefe, and Eisler) cover the thirteen years of the Hamilton-O'Keeffe story, each offering a slightly different version, depending on when, where, and with whom the biographer was working.

- Accounts by Robinson (pp. 695-737, published in 1989, with an unrelated appendix in 2020), Eisler (pp. 489-482, published in 1991), and Drohojowska-Philp (pp. 510-550, published in 2004) are based on interviews with the artist's family, late-life caregivers, and a few friends, as well as newspaper and magazine reports of O'Keeffe's last years. They present detailed chronological descriptions from Hamilton's arrival through O'Keeffe's death and include the dramatic court battle over her estate.
- Unlike the above biographers, Jeffrey Hogrefe uses Hamilton's story to frame his narrative of O'Keeffe's life. In the Prologue of *O'Keeffe: An American Legend* (published in 1992) he tells the story of Hamilton's arrival at the ranch. In his concluding Epilogue, he focuses on the litigation after O'Keeffe's death. His account of the Hamilton episode (pages 258-322) is deeply detailed and psychologically complex largely because the biographer was able to strike up a friendship with Hamilton, who invited Hogrefe to accompany him on art-related business trips, showed him the New Mexico places Georgia loved, asked him into his home for meals and conversation, and even rented a nearby house to Hogrefe where he could work. That personal relationship, which continued for more than a year, gave this biographer an enviable access into the events and people of that period, affording insights that the other writers do not have.

In addition to these, three other published sources focus on O'Keeffe's final years:

Painting with O'Keeffe (1973-1975) by John Poling
Weekends with O'Keeffe (1973-1979), by C.S. Merrill
Miss O'Keeffe (1984-1985), by Christine Taylor Patten and Alvaro Cardona-Hine

These candid, first-person accounts by people who lived with O'Keeffe at Ghost Ranch, Abiquiu, and Sol y Sombra give us an insight into the Hamilton era that other biographers do not.

As I worked on. The excerpt from Rebecca Solnit's *The Faraway Nearby* appears on p. 1 of that book. Drohojowska-Philp is the biographer who wrote "print the myth" (p. 3). You may remember a similar resonate line from the John Ford movie, *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valence*: "When the legend becomes fact, print the legend."

O'Keeffe was displeased. Hamilton's later retelling appears in "Georgia O'Keeffe's Younger Man," by Charlotte Cowles, in *Harper's Bazaar*, February 24, 2016. "Rumors abounded that Georgia and I were secretly married," Hamilton added, "but Georgia just thought that was funny as could be—she loved it." (The article also contains an excellent photo of the pair.)

And there was more. For Hamilton's premonition about O'Keeffe's need for care, see Hogrefe, p. 4. At the time, Hogrefe says, Hamilton felt lost and frightened. He knew that O'Keeffe and Stieglitz had spent summers at Lake George because his then-wife, an admirer of O'Keeffe, had hung a print of her painting, "Lake George with Crows," at their Vermont cabin. Hogrefe (p. 8) cites Georgia's mystical belief that Juan was sent to her. To another biographer, Hamilton says that O'Keeffe felt that she had a special power to attract the helpers she needed, when she needed them. He told another biographer, "She thought that it was her magic to some extent, that someone would knock on the door and it would be me" (Drohojowska-Philp, p. 518).

Perhaps there was something of a sauce-for-the-goose about O'Keeffe's relationship with Hamilton. To a reporter from *People Magazine*, Hamilton noted that O'Keeffe told him, "'All the men artists can have young women, but people think it's shocking that I might have a young man in my life.'" (Cowan, 1979). The artist might have been thinking specifically of her husband's affair with Dorothy Norman that disrupted her marriage so traumatically. Stieglitz was sixty-three when it began; Norman was just twenty-two.

Hogrefe (p. 288) observes that Hamilton appears to have fueled rumors of a marriage in the *People* interview and in another, with *Times* reporter Grace Glueck:

> Only adding to his enigmatic image, he spoke of omens and signs to Grace Glueck of *The New York Times* and even indicated that he and O'Keeffe were like husband and wife, responding, "No comment," when asked if he intended to marry the ninety-year-old artist.

I was an employee. Hamilton made the remark in a 1987 interview with Drohojowska-Philp (p. 515).

The friendship developed. Charlotte Cowles reports Hamilton's words in "Georgia O'Keeffe's Younger Man" (cited above).

Maybe not. Maria's prophetic, long-ago comment about Georgia's need for a caregiver is in *Correspondence,* Letter 7, March 28, 1941, p. 5.

From travel companions, Perry Miller Adato's 59-minute made-for-television film, *Georgia O'Keeffe: Portrait of an Artist* was produced in 1976. It offers a brief look into O'Keeffe's and Hamilton's studio work and their close personal relationship. O'Keeffe's charming narration enlivens the biographical documentary. The film concealed the artist's near-total blindness and made it appear that she was fully sighted. Although she was filmed climbing the ladder to the roof, the scene was carefully staged and rehearsed. She couldn't see well enough to manage the ladder without assistance (Drohojowska-Philp, pp. 527-528).

The autobiography is *Georgia O'Keeffe*, 1976. The contract with Viking (negotiated by agent Robert Lescher), gave her control of the text, photography, and color separations in an unusual large-format 11 x 14-inch page. She gave Hamilton full responsibility for the project; he worked closely with editor David Bell to select and compile the 108 color plates (Drohojowska-Philp, p. 519).

The person who. The Halpert episode is described by journalist Ralph Looney in his memoir, *O'Keeffe and Me: A Treasured Friendship*. Writing an article on O'Keeffe for *The Atlantic,* Looney interviewed the artist's exclusive dealer, Edith Halpert at The Downtown Gallery. Halpert told Looney that O'Keeffe's paintings sold for between $3,500 and $15,000. When Looney shared this information with O'Keeffe. she "went off like a skyrocket," He says:

> Suddenly, O'Keeffe had become imperious, exposing her rock-hard will . . . "If anyone's interested, they can ask [for prices], and anyway, I've gotten much, much more than the top figure the Downtown Gallery gave you!" Her lip curled and she added, "Much more! . . . I'm conceited enough to know what pictures I paint will sell. If a picture doesn't sell now, it will sell in two or three years. I did a painting three or four years ago that no one was interested in. In recent months three people have expressed interest in that picture. Each time, the price goes up, and I don't know what price I'll finally ask—and get—for it" (Looney, pp. 41-42).

Drohojowska-Philp comments that O'Keeffe wanted to act as her own dealer, following Stieglitz's example as a canny and forceful negotiator. But she displayed a notable lack of tact. In reply to a collector's inquiry about buying "Canadian Barn," O'Keeffe wrote bluntly, "If I sell it the price will not be low and I am not at all sure that you would be interested" (pp. 438-439).

All this was. For O'Keeffe's relationship with Bry, see Robinson, pp. 670-671. O'Keeffe's rueful recognition of the importance of being "written about" occurs in a letter to D. McMurdo, July 1, 1922, quoted in Cowart, Hamilton, and Greenough, *O'Keeffe*, p. 169.

As time went on, O'Keeffe became more determined to direct the buzz and manage her image, to the point of actually controlling what was written about her. Art critic and curator Lawrence Alloway reports that when he attempted to obtain photographs of O'Keeffe's work to illustrate an article, he learned that he couldn't get permission to use the photographs until Juan Hamilton approved what Alloway had written. Obviously annoyed, Alloway remarks in a prominent sidebar that this kind of control creates the "risk of artist-centered (or agent-centered) regulation of art criticism. Under these circumstances one might easily feel it necessary to write articles for O'Keeffe instead of about her" ("Notes on Georgia O'Keeffe's Imagery," *Womanart,* Spring-Summer, 1977 (Vol. 1, No. 4).

It is one of the very rare occasions when a critic dared to call O'Keeffe out in print for attempting to require people to write what she wanted them to write, rather than write critically about her. (Hope Aldrich's 1978 articles in the *Santa Fe Reporter* are another.) Most simply gave in, or gave up the attempt.

The unusual arrangement. Drohojowska-Philp relates the Bry episode (pp. 525-526). Hamilton defended his work as O'Keeffe's agent by pointing out that he was able to increase the value of her paintings by one hundred percent a year, taking her work from a 1972 high of $125,000 to close to a million by 1983 (Drohojowska-Philp, p. 526). As an agent, he would have earned an immediate commission of ten to twenty percent (likely twenty, given their relationship) for each painting he sold.

The Hamilton suit. *The New York Times* provides comprehensive coverage of the trio of suits in an article by Edith Evans Asbury, "Georgia O'Keeffe Is Involved in Two Suits Linked to Agent Fees on Her Paintings" (November 20, 1978, p. B10). Bry's lawyer offered as evidence of a binding agreement a document that O'Keeffe had signed, stating that she anticipated that Doris Bry would "supervise the disposition of most or all of the pictures owned by O'Keeffe at the time of her death." Asbury adds that being O'Keeffe's agent has a "high-profit potential," citing a painting currently for sale for $220,000, an almost-unheard-of price at the time. On both sides, the rhetoric was barbed. Bry's lawyer is quoted as saying "The justly famous can be cruel and wrong as they can be courageous and talented." Hamilton growled that the suit aimed at him was simply harassment—"trying to get at Miss O'Keeffe through me."

Both suits were settled by 1985, but the outcome was not pleasant for anyone. Most in the art community sided with Bry. O'Keeffe won no fans, Hamilton's reputation was deeply, perhaps irretrievably, scarred, and both were viewed with an increasing suspicion. It was an uncomfortable time. Lisle (p. 435) says, "The atmosphere around the artist now became distinctly Machiavellian, owing to all the secrecy, rumors, intrigue, speculation, and vying for influence." When it was done, Bry remarked bitterly that if she could live the last thirty years over again, she wouldn't devote it to Georgia O'Keeffe.

But a dozen years later, Bry had apparently mellowed. In 1990, in the aftermath of the angry court battles over O'Keeffe's estate, Jo Ann Lewis interviewed her for a sympathetic article titled, "Doris Bry: The Legend of O'Keeffe" (*Washington Post,* January 7, 1990). Lewis quotes Bry as feeling no animosity toward O'Keeffe for the way she was treated. "She never would have done this to me," Bry said, and blamed Hamilton for the sad affair. The observation that the episode ended with Hamilton "reigning supreme" can be found in Robinson, pp. 710-711.

Hamilton was well aware. O'Keeffe sent a check for $100,000 to the Museum of New Mexico in 1980, but (according to Robinson, pp. 722-723) the money could be used only to fund the purchases of a Hamilton sculpture and an O'Keeffe painting. "Inextricably linked" appears on p. 704, as does "not exactly voluntary," referring to Georgia's pressuring philanthropist and art collector Joseph Hirshhorn to buy one of Hamilton's pots. To many, this pairing mirrored the Stieglitz-O'Keeffe working relationship, no doubt encouraging people to imagine a romantic relationship as well. O'Keeffe's cultivation of an enigmatic and mysterious persona perhaps made it easier to imagine all sorts of things.

Given all these. The phrase "medieval court of intrigue" (Merrill, p. 176) echoes Lisle's comment about the competitive and "Machiavellian" atmosphere around O'Keeffe, "owing," as Lisle says, "to all the secrecy, rumors, intrigue, speculation, and vying for influence" that went on at this time. (Lisle, 1997, p. 435). Merrill's candid remarks about Georgia's temper: *Weekends*, pp. 90, 94, 98, 99, 147, 226. Her poem, "I can say how I felt today" (p. 95) perfectly depicts the undercurrents among O'Keeffe's employees and friends, with even her iconic Mandarin costumes "conspiring in the closet."

The situation became. Hogrefe describes Georgia's worries as exacerbated by her fear that Hamilton would leave her. They had finished their collaborative projects and he had no reason to stay with her, which meant that his absences were especially troubling (Hogrefe, p. 235). O'Keeffe's grand-nephew, Raymond Krueger, visited about that time and confirmed that his aunt was deeply troubled about Hamilton's frequent and unexplained absences (p. 236). For Phoebe Pack's heartfelt advice: p. 293. For Hamilton's shopping sprees, pp. 317-318.

Hamilton and Anna Maria. Robinson suggests that while O'Keeffe might have recognized rationally that Hamilton needed a lover his own age, accepting it emotionally was another matter. Hamilton told the biographer that the first meeting between Anna

Maria and O'Keeffe was "not a success" (Robinson, p. 706). O'Keeffe's phrase, "that poor thing," is reported in Robinson, p. 706.

But Georgia was. The story of the tragic trip to Palm Beach is related in Hogrefe, Chapter 31.

Finally, in O'Keeffe's name. Christine Taylor Patten's book, *Miss O'Keeffe,* provides a reliable, contemporaneous account of this period, including the difficult August, 1984, day on which the artist executed a codicil to her 1979 will, leaving Hamilton almost all of her estate, some sixty-five million dollars, including cash and stocks, real estate, paintings, copyrights, and letters. Hamilton himself was to serve as executor, for a fee of $200,000. Patten relates the story in Chapter 21 (pp. 181-196), with a detailed record of the disturbing conversation she and O'Keeffe had in the previous month. O'Keeffe seemed to believe that Anna Maria agreed "to stop being married" so she and Juan could legally marry and she could bequeath him her houses (Ghost Ranch, Abiquiu, Santa Fe) and other properties without any tax penalty (Patten, p. 184).

The story continued. Georgia's sister's remark about the "tramp" and National Gallery of Art curator Jack Cowart's "trench warfare" are quoted in a *Washington Post* story by Jo Ann Lewis: "The War Over O'Keeffe," March 3, 1987.

Robinson's account of the contentious legal proceedings (pp. 730-736) is detailed and complete. Hogrefe's "Epilogue" (pp. 3 25-328) is rather more personal:

> When I arrived in Santa Fe to begin this book in January 1987, Hamilton seemed to be reconciling himself to an inevitable defeat. He was worn down. His inheritance had been frozen during probate, and not only were the costs of the legal proceedings mounting, his style of life required more income than the sales of his sculptures were able to generate. A few weeks later, faced with the possibility that he could lose his entire inheritance, Hamilton agreed to settle with the relatives.

The Associated Press reported (without apparent irony) that the estate, valued at $65 million, was settled "amicably" (Ed Moreno, "Artist's Estate Settled Amicably," Associated Press, July 25, 1987. Hamilton was given about 10 percent of the estate, the Ghost Ranch house ,and at least 24 paintings. An essential component of the settlement was the creation of the Georgia O'Keeffe Foundation, a non-profit foundation that would distribute forty-two artworks to museums and other institutions.

While the situation. Hamilton's remark is quoted in Lewis, "The War Over O'Keeffe."

The end came. Robinson (pp. 731-736) has additional details of the settlement.

It wasn't a compromise. The lawyer's assessment of "capitulation" is reported by Edward Abrahams, in "O'Keeffe Sun and Shadow," in the *Washington Post,* November 12, 1989.

After her divorce. Maria's activities and achievements are described in her *New York Times* obituary ("Maria Chabot, 87, Dies; Began Indian Market and Was an O'Keeffe Associate," Douglas Martin, July 15, 2001, Section 1, p. 23):

> In 1946, Ms. Chabot agreed to manage the rebuilding of an adobe hacienda on a hilltop in Abiquiu, 48 miles northwest of Santa Fe. She supervised the building crew and participated in design decisions for what became O'Keeffe's winter home. "I had never found anything as romantic as this beat-up building, a ruin really," Ms. Chabot said in an interview with *The Albuquerque Journal* in 1999 when the house was dedicated as a national landmark. "It took six months just to get the pigs out of the house."

It took fifty-four years, but Maria Chabot at last got the credit for building her friend's house—a house that became an iconic frame for the artist and her work.

In her later years. Richard Brettell's letter, held in the Maria Chabot Collection at the O'Keeffe Archive, is dated August 9, 1994. The planned book, which Brettell seems to have contemplated during the process of getting the house recognized as a National Historic Landmark, never materialized.

But in 1991. The condition of the letters and the laborious process of compiling and editing them is described in the introduction to *Correspondence,* pp. xxii-xiii.

Nevertheless, the Foundation. In July, 1998, Maria agreed to serve as a consultant with the newly-established Georgia O'Keeffe Museum, sharing what she knew of their lives together in the 1940s and the work on both of Georgia's houses. As a consultant, she would be paid $30,000 that year and $25,000 a year until her death (confirmed by an archivist there: personal communication, April 20, 2022). This arrangement was finalized about the time that the nomination of the Abiquiu house as a National Historic Landmark was under consideration. The Chabot Papers were donated after Maria's death by the Maria Chabot Literary Trust.

Maria died in 2001. The letter collection itself is an admirable work. It is disappointing that the editors chose to impose a particular interpretive reading on them and to reflect that interpretation so clearly in their editorial introduction and notes. But this does not detract from the value of the individual letters or alter what the letters have to tell us about each of the women as individuals and about their relationship, changing as it does over the years. For a fuller critique of the editorial work, see " Reading Published Letter

Collections as Literary Texts: Maria Chabot—Georgia O'Keeffe Correspondence, 1941–1949 as a Case Study," by Linda M. Grasso, Legacy , 2008, Vol. 25, No. 2, Selected Papers from the 2006 Conference of the Society for the Study of American Women Writers (2008), pp. 239-250.

And there is. From Maria's letter to Georgia, *Correspondence,* p. 148, Letter 115. December 10, 1943. Throughout their long lives, both Maria and Georgia continued to believe that even the most painful experience is an invitation to redefine and re-story who we are and what we want and need.

TIMELINE: THE LIVES OF GEORGIA O'KEEFFE AND MARIA CHABOT

This is a joint timeline (O'Keeffe in roman, Chabot in italic). For the artist's life, see the O'Keeffe Museum's detailed timeline.

1887

November 15: Georgia Totto O'Keeffe born.

1892–1905

GOK's early education, high school in Wisconsin, Virginia.

1905-1913

1905: GOK attends School of The Art Institute of Chicago and Art Students League, New York. 1908-1911: works as free-lance commercial artist, Chicago. 1912-1913: attends drawing classes at University of Virginia, Charlottesville; works as public school supervisor of drawing and penmanship in Amarillo, Texas, teaches summers at UVA.

1913

September 18: Mary Lea Chabot born. Also reported as September 19.

1914-1915

Fall 1914: GOK enrolls at Teachers College, Columbia University. Fall 1915: GOK moves to Columbia, South Carolina, to teach art at Columbia College.

1916

Pollitzer takes GOK's drawings to Stieglitz. GOK returns to Columbia, begins correspondence with Stieglitz. Stieglitz opens group show that includes some of GOK's charcoal drawings. GOK returns to Virginia to teach in the summer, moves to Texas to teach in the fall.

1917

Stieglitz opens first one-person show of GOK's work;

August: GOK vacations in Colorado, with sister Claudia; stops in Santa Fe, determines to return to New Mexico. Early winter: GOK becomes ill, leaves position.

1918

GOK arrives in NY, moves into studio apartment with Stieglitz.

1921

Stieglitz displays O'Keeffe nude photographs, creates sensation.

1923

Stieglitz begins annual shows of GOK's art.

1924-1925

GOK and Stieglitz marry, move to Shelton Hotel.

1927

Stieglitz begins affair with Dorothy Norman.

1928

Chabot graduates high school in San Antonio, Texas, at 15.
Stieglitz announces sale of six O'Keeffe calla lily paintings for $25,000.

1929-1932

GOK begins annual summer (June-October or November) painting trips to New Mexico, first with Beck Strand as guests of Mabel Dodge Luhan in Taos/ then H&R Guest Ranch, Alcalde.

1933

GOK diagnosed with "psychoneurosis," hospitalized March-April.
Chabot travels to Mexico City, meets Dorothy Stewart, begins intimate relationship.

1934-1935

GOK moves to rented cottage at Ghost Ranch for summer; she will return every year through 1949.
Chabot begins practice of spending April-November in Santa Fe, December-March in San Antonio. Travels with Stewart to East Coast, begins working with New Mexico Association on Indian Affairs. 1935: also works with WPA to document Native art; meets Mary Wheelwright.

1936

GOK and Stieglitz move from Shelton Hotel to penthouse apartment at 405 East 54th Street. In summer, GOK moves to the house at Ghost Ranch she will later buy.

Chabot named Executive Secretary of NMAIA, establishes Indian Market in Santa Fe, works for federal Indian Arts and Crafts Board.

1937-1938

Chabot travels to Europe, Middle East, Africa with Stewart.

GOK goes to Hawaii in spring, 1938, to produce advertising paintings for Dole Company, to New Mexico in summer.

Chabot and Stewart continue travel; Chabot attends Oxford summer institute, meets Dana Bailey.

1939

Chabot works for the federal Bureau of Indian Affairs on arts assessment project, for NMAIA on Navajo project.

1940

May: GOK buys house at Ghost Ranch. October: Chabot and GOK meet at Wheelwright's estate, Los Luceros, travel to Navajoland and Black Place.

1941

April: GOK invites Chabot to manage the house at Ghost Ranch, June-November. They travel to Black Place and White Place. November: GOK returns to New York, Chabot to Texas in December—a practice they will continue. War begins with attack at Pearl Harbor, December 7.

1942

May: GOK and Chabot begin search for garden property, visit the ruined house at Abiquiu. When GOK returns to New York, she and Stieglitz move to 59 East 54th Street.

1943

January, GOK goes to Chicago to install show at the Art Institute of Chicago. Chabot joins her. In April, both return to Ghost Ranch, continuing search for garden site.

1944

March, Alice Brayton invites Chabot to travel to New York, where GOK invites her to stay with her and Stieglitz. GOK and Chabot both arrive at Ghost Ranch in April. Chabot considers leaving in July (too many unannounced visitors) but stays through October, when both women agree to separate. Mary Wheelwright announces that she is bequeathing Los Luceros to Maria.

1945

March: Chabot moves to Los Luceros, where she begins farmland restoration projects. GOK invites Maurice Grosser to stay at Ghost Ranch. October: Chabot works actively to facilitate GOK's purchase of the Abiquiu house, which is settled in December.

1946

March: Chabot settles at Los Luceros, divides her time between work there and on the Abiquiu house. GOK oversees MoMA show, arrives at Ghost Ranch in June. Stieglitz stricken July 10, GOK returns to New York, where he dies July 13. Chabot takes necessities to New York and is rebuffed by O'Keeffe. O'Keeffe hires Doris Bry and begins dispersal of Stieglitz estate, returns to NM briefly in September-October.

1947-1949

GOK and Bry work on settling the Stieglitz estate. Chabot works on the Abiquiu house and at Los Luceros. GOK and Bry make brief occasional visits to New Mexico.

1949

Chabot completes work on the Abiquiu house. In June, GOK returns to New Mexico, planning to divide her time between Ghost Ranch (summer) and Abiquiu (winter).

1950

GOK organizes show at An American Place in October. She appoints Edith Halpert (The Downtown Gallery) as her exclusive agent.

1950s

In 1950, GOK travels to Mexico and the Yucatan; in 1959, to Hawaii, Southeast Asia, the Far East, India, the Middle East, Italy. Chabot is with Dorothy Stewart when Stewart dies in Mexico City in December, 1955, leaving Santa Fe properties to Chabot. GOK travels to Peru in 1956. Mary Cabot Wheelwright dies in July, 1958, leaving Los Luceros to Chabot.

1960s

GOK makes second trip to Asia in 1960. Chabot and Bailey begin planning marriage. February 14, 1961: Chabot and Bailey are married; they separate within the year, divorce in 1962. Chabot and her mother move to Albuquerque. In 1963, GOK removes paintings from Halpert's Downtown Gallery and names Doris Bry her exclusive agent. Her eyesight may have become compromised about this time.

1970s

O'Keeffe has lost central vision, has only peripheral sight, but continues to work with assistance until 1984. 1973: GOK employs Juan Hamilton as her assistant, then companion, manager, and agent. 1977: she receives Presidential Medal of Freedom from President Gerald Ford. 1978: GOK removes Doris Bry as her assistant, curator, exclusive dealer, and executor and sues for recovery of paintings. Bry sues O'Keeffe and Hamilton; O'Keeffe countersues. Sealed out-of-court settlement concluded in 1985.

1980s

1984: Hamilton moves GOK to large house in Santa Fe, Sol y Sombra. 1985: GOK is awarded National Medal of Arts by President Ronald Reagan. 1986, March 6: GOK dies at St. Vincent's Hospital, Santa Fe. 1987: Hamilton and O'Keeffe family settle disputed estate, O'Keeffe Foundation established.

1990s

Chabot begins working with O'Keeffe Foundation to publish letters. Hires Ann Paden as her editor. 1996. Chabot named Santa Fe "Living Treasure" for her work in establishing the Indian Market. 1998. Chabot assumes a consultancy with the Foundation.

2000s

2001, July 9: Chabot dies in Albuquerque. 2003: Maria Chabot—Georgia O'Keeffe Correspondence, 1941-1949 published by the University of New Mexico Press, edited by Barbara Buhler Lynes and Ann Paden.

WHO'S WHO IN SOMEONE ALWAYS NEARBY

CHARACTERS WHO APPEAR OR ARE PROMINENTLY MENTIONED IN THE NOVEL

Adams, Ansel (1902-1984). Renowned landscape photographer and environmentalist; friend of Alfred Stieglitz.

Bailey, Dana (1916-1999). American astrophysicist, briefly (1961-1962) married to Maria Chabot.

Bickhaus, Reverend William. Priest, El Rito Parish (1932-1946). Opposes sale of Abiquiu house to Georgia O'Keeffe.

Bode, Martin. Partner in the Abiquiu store, Gonzales & Bode General Merchandise; German immigrant.

Brayton, Alice (1878-1972). Friend of Mary Wheelwright, invites Chabot on trip to New York.

Brunette, Flora Martinez: Barranco resident. Supplies vegetables, milk, eggs to O'Keeffe.

Bry, Doris (1920-2014). O'Keeffe's assistant, curator, and agent from 1946-1982.

Byrne, Edwin Vincent. Archbishop of Santa Fe 1943-1963. Agrees to sell Abiquiu house to O'Keeffe.

Callery, Mary (1903-1977). American abstract expressionist sculptor, friend of O'Keeffe.

Candelario, John (1916-1993). Santa Fe photographer, friend of Chabot, one of O'Keeffe's "young men."

Chabot, Charles Jasper (1866-1947). Chabot's father, San Antonio TX businessman.

Chabot, Maria (1913-2001). Native American activist, writer, rancher, architect/builder of the National Landmark Abiquiu House and Studio

Chabot, Olive Anderson (1986-1975). Chabot's mother.

Chapman, Kate (1877-1944). Santa Fe adobe residential architect, builder.

Cox, Orville. Head wrangler at Ghost Ranch, subject of O'Keeffe "flirtatious" photograph.

Dietrich, Margretta Stewart (1881-1961). Santa Fe Native American activist, Dorothy Stewart's sister, friend of Chabot.

Edwards, Emily (1888-1980). Chabot's cousin; artist, art historian, art teacher.

Ferrally, Katherine. Real estate agent in Northern New Mexico; friend of Chabot.

Garcia, Finiano: kept chickens on Abiquiu property.

Grosser, Maurice (1903-1986). Painter, one of O'Keeffe's "young men."

Halpert, Edith Gregor (1900-1970). Owner of The Downtown Gallery, New York. O'Keeffe's art dealer (1950-1963).

Hamilton, Juan (1945-). Potter, O'Keeffe's manager and agent (1973-1986), heir. The last of O'Keeffe's "young men."

Kearney, Cresson (1914-2003). Chabot's cousin; introduced her to Dana Bailey.

Kiskadden, Peggy (1904-1994): O'Keeffe's friend and patron; ex-wife of Henwar Rodakiewicz.

Long, Anton (Tony). Chabot's friend, son of Santa Fe poet Hamiel Long.

Luhan, Mabel Dodge (1879-1962): Taos arts patron, author. Married to Tony Luhan, Taos Pueblo Indian, rumored lover of O'Keeffe.

Martinez, Bernice Valasquez: O'Keeffe pregnant employee at Ghost Ranch.

McBride, Henry (1867-1962). Art critic for the New York Sun, writes frequently about O'Keeffe.

Merrill, Carol. Weekend caregiver (1973-1979) of O'Keeffe, author of Weekends With O'Keeffe.

Newhall, Beaumont (1908-1993). Curator of photography, Museum of Modern Art; friend of Stieglitz. Married to Nancy Newhall (1908-1974), photography critic, writer; friend of Stieglitz and Dorothy Norman.

Norman, Dorothy (1905-1997): New York photographer, writer, arts patron. Mistress of Stieglitz.

O'Keeffe, Anita (1892-1905). O'Keeffe's younger sister and wife of Robert R. Young, wealthy financier and industrialist.

O'Keeffe, Claudia (1899-1984). Youngest of O'Keeffe's four sisters, frequent visitor to Ghost Ranch and Abiquiu.

O'Keeffe, Georgia (1887-1986). Famous American modernist artist. Known for her paintings of enlarged flowers, New York skyscrapers, and New Mexico landscapes. Married (1924-1946) to Stieglitz.

O'Keeffe, Ida (1889-1961): O'Keeffe's sister, landscape/still-life artist.

Pack, Arthur (1893-1975). Owner of Ghost Ranch, environmentalist, founder of the American Nature Association and Nature Magazine. Married to Phoebe Finley Pack (1907-2000).

Patten, Christine Taylor: New Mexico artist. Nurse and caregiver of O'Keeffe (1983-1984).

Pfaffle, Carol Stanley (1879-1948). Owner of San Gabriel Ranch, Los Luceros, and Ghost Ranch (1928-1933). Married to Roy Phaffle, who won Ghost Ranch in a poker game (1928).

Poling, John D. Studio assistant of O'Keeffe (1973). Raised ethical questions about unacknowledged assistance.

Pritzlaff, Richard (1902-1997): Owner of San Ignacio Ranch, Sapello, New Mexico. Arabian horse breeder, one of O'Keeffe's "young men," who provided her with Siamese cats and chow dogs.

Rodakiewicz, Henwar (1903-1976). Writer and documentary filmmaker, friend of Stieglitz; one of O'Keeffe's "young men."

Seth, O.J. Santa Fe attorney for O'Keeffe, Wheelwright, Chabot.

Sims, Agnes (1910-1990). Santa Fe artist, adobe builder, partnered (1939-mid 1940s) with Dorothy Stewart.

Staffle, Rudi (1911-2002). Porcelain artist, San Antonio friend of Chabot.

Stewart, Dorothy (1891-1955). Santa Fe artist, partner of Chabot (1933-1939), intimate friend.

Stieglitz, Alfred (1864-1946). Prominent photographer, New York gallerist, impressario. Married to O'Keeffe (1924-1946).

Strand, Beck, aka Becky James (1891-1968). Friend of O'Keeffe. Married to artist Paul Strand (1922-1933) and to William James (1937-1967) , owner of Kit Carson Trading Company in Taos.

Toomer, Jean (1894-1967). American poet and novelist. Friend, probable lover of O'Keeffe (1933-1934).

Wells, Cady (1904-1954). Painter, resident of Jacona, New Mexico. One of O'Keeffe's "young men."

Wheelwright, Mary Cabot (1878-1958). Wealthy Bostonian, owner of Los Luceros, founder of Wheelwright Museum of the American Indian in Santa Fe. Chabot's friend and benefactor.

Wright, Frank Lloyd (1867-1959). American architect, designer, writer, and educator, visited by O'Keeffe in 1942.

CHARACTERS BRIEFLY MENTIONED IN THE NOVEL

Cabot, Lucy (d. 1944). Cousin and companion to Mary Wheelwright.

Cather, Willa (1873-1947). Author, Pulitzer Prize winner, inspiration to Chabot.

Chabot, Frederick (1891-1943). Chabot's half-brother, Texas historian.

Ferran, Joe. Abiquiu resident, managed Bode's Garage, kept pigs in the Abiquiu house.

Garcia, Polito. Los Luceros farm worker.

Johnson, Esther "Essie" Underwood: friend of O'Keeffe, owner of New Jersey farm where O'Keeffe stayed weekends. Married to Seward Johnson (of Johnson & Johnson Pharmaceuticals).

Maestas, Alfredo. Administrator of the Abiquiu Land Grant, helps Chabot gather construction materials.

Marriott, Alice (1907-2000). Red Cross worker and Chabot friend.

McAlpin, David (1897-1989). philanthropist and co-founder with Ansel Adams and Beaumont Newhall of the photography department at the Museum of Modern Art, New York. Stieglitz friend.

McKibbin, Dorothy "Dink" (1897-1985). Employee of Los Alamos Laboratory, later known as the "First Lady of Los Alamos."

O'Brien, Frances (1904-1990). Portrait artist, O'Keeffe friend.

Peabody, Ted. Builder of Ghost Ranch house.

Pollitzer, Anita (1894-1975). American photographer, suffragist. Early O'Keeffe friend.

Porter, Eliot (1901-1990). Photographer, one of O'Keeffe's "young men," married to Aline Porter

Posey, Joe. Caretaker/gardener at Los Luceros; married to Mildred Posey, Los Luceros cook/housekeeper.

Rush, Olive (1873-1966). Santa Fe artist, Chabot friend.

Toll, Augustine. Santa Fe County nurse, Chabot friend.

Zorach, William (1889-1966). Modernist sculptor, painter, writer. Stieglitz friend

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