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Spanish Crown Prince Tours NM History Museum, Lauds Four Centuries of Cultural Interactions

Santa Fe, NM (Oct. 7, 2009) – His Royal Highness Prince Felipe of Spain, with his wife, Princess Letizia, on Tuesday visited the New Mexico History Museum, which he called “amazing” for its depictions of diverse cultures living and sometimes clashing over the centuries.

During a ceremony in the Palace of the Governors Courtyard, the Prince officially opened Santa Fe’s 400th anniversary, which celebrates the 1609 establishment of a permanent colony in what was Spain’s far northern frontier.

“The Hispanic roots of the United States are being better known and better acknowledged,” Prince Felipe said during the ceremony. “They are at the very core of your great nation.”

The Prince and his wife toured *Telling New Mexico: Stories from Then and Now*, the core exhibition of the Museum, which opened May 24. The Museum’s campus includes the Palace of the Governors, the oldest continuously occupied government building in the nation.

In 1987, King Juan Carlos I planted a cottonwood sapling in the Courtyard, which has since grown into a towering tree – one that Felipe, his son, took special notice of during his visit. Under the flash of cameras from nearly two dozen New Mexico and foreign journalists, the Prince and Princess ended their Courtyard visit by walking down to the tree. They then entered the Palace to see the exhibition *Tesoros de Devocion* before continuing on to the Basilica de St. Francis and, then, a public event in the Santa Fe Plaza.

“The Prince was very inquisitive,” said John McCarthy, deputy director of the Museum. “He already knew a lot about New Mexico and U.S. history, including the Native codetalkers. It was like having two friends together.”

Info on attached photos

1. Prince Felipe and Princess Letizia of Spain in the Palace of the Governors Courtyard Tuesday in Santa Fe. Photo by Nicholas Chiarella, New Mexico History Museum.
2. Princess Letizia of Spain listens to an oral history of the Manhattan Project on an antique pay phone at the New Mexico History Museum. With her are (from left) John McCarthy, deputy director of the Museum; Santa Fe Mayor David Coss; Prince Felipe; and DCA Secretary Stuart Ashman. Photo by Nicholas Chiarella, New Mexico History Museum.

3. His Majesty King Juan Carlos I of Spain helps plant a cottonwood sapling in the Palace of the Governors Courtyard on Sept. 29, 1987. His son, Prince Felipe, visited the Courtyard in Santa Fe Tuesday. Photo by Dalda, courtesy of the Palace of the Governors Photo Archives.

The New Mexico History Museum is a 96,000-square-foot addition to the Palace of the Governors' campus, which includes the Fray Angélico Chávez History Library and Photo Archives, the Palace Print Shop & Bindery, and the Portal Program. The New Mexico History Museum/Palace of the Governors is a division of the Department of Cultural Affairs. The Museum is at 113 Lincoln Ave., just north of the Palace at 105 W. Palace Ave., on the Santa Fe Plaza. For more information, visit www.nmhistorymuseum.org or www.palaceofthegovernors.org.

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