

La Crónica de Nuevo México



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THE NEW GUY ON THE BLOCK

In June of 1976, The Historical Society of New Mexico distributed "ISSUE NO. 1" of an unnamed publication. The flag contained, in BOLD CAPS, the question, "¿WHAT SHALL WE NAME IT?" [sic] Readers were parenthetically, and in a miniscule type face, instructed to turn to page 4, the last page of that particular edition, where contest rules were provided, to wit: "The contest is open to all. We want the best name, the most appropriate title. Reach into your minds. Search the depths of your imagination. Look into the deepest recesses of your intellect. Name this newspaper, which is destined to be a vital, essential, vibrant indispensable tool for history and preservation in New Mexico."

The prize offered for the winning entry was "fresh from the University of New Mexico Press, a copy of: *Acoma Pueblo, Pueblo in the Sky* by Dr. Ward Alan Minge."

The second edition of the publication was not issued until December of 1976. On the front page, above the fold, was a headline which read: "Pedro Ribera-Ortega Gives Us a Name-see above." The "see above" referred to the new flag: LA CRÓNICA DE NUEVO MÉXICO, which remains with us yet today. The headline was accompanied by a photo of HSNM president Loraine Lavender presenting a certificate and Dr. Minge's book to Mr. Pedro Ribera-Ortega. See the box below for more about that esteemed gentleman, who was named a Santa Fe Living Treasure in 2001. He died in 2003.

Ribera-Ortega is proud of his Hispanic heritage. He lives in the house he was born in and can trace his family back 20 generations to Spain. "He represents much of what makes the city of holy faith unique," says friend Richard McCord.

Pedro Ribera-Ortega has been actively involved with city and religious interests since his junior-high days. "Santa Fe is unique," he said. "The old Spanish families have been involved in the church and state in order for Santa Fe to continue its Hispanic style. It's automatic for us."

Few know more about Santa Fe's rich Hispanic heritage than Ribera-Ortega. As a writer, teacher, archivist, linguist and mentor, he has spent his 70 years fiercely protecting the city's cultural and religious traditions.

The masthead on the first edition showed the editors as Michael F. Weber, who served as chairman of the Publications Committee, along with John P. Conron and Paul Suozzi. That arrangement seems to have continued until Conron became sole editor in August of 1977. Former HSNM President Mike Stevenson believes that Conron was the moving force behind *La Crónica* in terms of format, content and style from the beginning. Carleen Lazzell served as Associate Editor for many years.

Conron continued as editor until his death in 1995 at which time Lazzell took over. Stevenson reported that Carleen had been doing most of the work for several years prior to that time and was reluctant to assume the role of editor even after Conron's death.

When Carleen Lazzell took the reins, she continued the basic publication as it had been done since 1976. For the last twenty years of her life, Carleen kept the publication alive almost singlehandedly. She deserves the gratitude of the entire Society. Over all of those years, too, Ron Hadad held the position of Associate Editor and did much of the work involved in layout, composition, publication, and distribution of *La Crónica*.

As the recently appointed editor of *La Crónica*, I am somewhat daunted by the fact that I assume the position as only the third editor in nearly 40 years. On the other hand, the publication is in great shape and requires of me only a continuation of what has gone before. Having said that, I would also note that there have been many suggestions as to ways in which *La Crónica* might be changed, and I am open any ideas HSNM members might have. A couple of changes will be noted in this edition. I would like to invite all Society members to contribute items for publication. My preference is articles ranging in length for as little as 500 words to 1000 or 1500. I am not enamored of items in the range 4,000 to 6,000 words, although they will be considered. I also encourage news items regarding activities of local historical groups.

Please feel free to contract me at any time via email: donbullis@msn.com.

I appreciate the confidence in me the Society's board of directors has demonstrated and I look forward to the coming years.

(Thanks to former President Mike Stevenson for his institutional memory of the Society.)

Don Bullis, Editor

Call For Papers



HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF NEW MEXICO

P. O. BOX 1912

SANTA FE, NM 87504-1912

2016 New Mexico History Conference

April 14-16, 2016

Farmington Civic Center, Farmington, New Mexico

The Historical Society of New Mexico invites papers, session proposals, and presentations for the 2016 New Mexico History Conference, to be held at the Farmington Civic Center, Farmington, New Mexico, April 14-16, 2016.

Deadline for submissions is September 30, 2015.

Conference sessions are 1½ hours (ninety minutes) in length. Most sessions consist of oral delivery of two or three papers or presentations, each approximately 20-30 minutes in length, including time for a moderator's introduction and questions from the audience. Proposals for single presentations should be limited to one page in length, include presenter contact and brief biographical information, presentation title, a synopsis, and any technical support needed. Two or three single proposals will be matched with similar topics to constitute a full session.

Proposals for topical sessions occupying the full 1½ hour period are encouraged. These should include a proposed title for the session, names of presenters, titles and synopsis of topics, a moderator, and contact information for all panel members. Digital projection systems and other audiovisual presentation equipment will be available.

Papers on any aspect New Mexico history, the Southwest or Borderlands will be considered. However, individual papers and full sessions related to the history, development and growth of San Juan County and northwest New Mexico, such as the region's colorful and influential personalities and oil and gas industry, will be welcome. Topics associated with the greater "Four Corners" region of southwest Colorado, Southeastern Utah, and northeast Arizona are suggested. This may include a broad range of subjects that explore the influence of the region's ethnic groups, as well as history of the Navajo, Jicarilla, and Ute Nations and the region's historic sites.

Proposals may be submitted as attachments to email at robertjtorrez@gmail.com or by mail to HSNM Program Committee, P.O. Box 1912, Santa Fe, NM 87504-1912. Notification of acceptance will be sent on or about January 1, 2016. To learn more about the Historical Society of New Mexico visit www.hsnm.org or if you have questions contact Robert J. Tórréz, program chair, at robertjtorrez@gmail.com or (505) 836-9699.

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The Pastor of New Mexico: Peter Küppers's Memoirs

Tomas Jaehn, Translator, Editor, and Annotator
Santa Fe: Sunstone Press, 2014
186 pp. \$22.95. Soft cover

Review by Richard Melzer

The Pastor of New Mexico: Peter Küppers's Memoirs is an interesting book for three main reasons.

First, it is the story of an immigrant who was born and raised in Germany before migrating to New Mexico in 1912. Once here, Küppers experienced a clash of cultures, requiring personal adjustments in dealing with everything from food and language to adobe architecture and democratic politics. In time, Küppers not only became acculturated, but also grew to become a cultural broker between the Hispanic and Anglo residents of his parishes.

Next, this is an interesting book because it is about the experience of a hard-working Catholic priest, first assigned to serve at St. Francis Cathedral and later to parishes in Santa Fe, in Chaparito on the vast mesa, and in Peñasco in the Sangre de Cristo Mountains. Küppers faced countless challenges in working with his local parishioners, the Penitente brotherhood, Protestant missionaries, Catholic nuns in exile from revolutionary Mexico, and his superiors, including the four archbishops of his era. While he had no patience for violent Penitentes, described as "disobedient, self-styled Catholics," he claimed to have worked well

with non-violent Penitentes who acknowledged the ultimate authority of the church and its priests, especially Fr. Küppers. Küppers in fact recognized the latter Penitentes as bulwarks against the encroachment of Protestant missionaries.

Finally, *The Pastor of New Mexico* is interesting because there are so few memoirs by European immigrants to New Mexico. There are even fewer memoirs by Catholic priests as active—and as controversial—as Fr. Küppers.

Tomas Jaehn is the ideal translator, editor, and annotator of Küppers's memoirs. He is a native German speaker, the able director of the Fray Angélico Chávez Library at the Museum of New Mexico, and the author of the acclaimed *Germans in the Southwest* (2005).

Readers might wish that the manuscript had undergone one last review and a bit more annotation (for example, the German Rough Rider captain who chided Küppers on the streets of Santa Fe was clearly Fritz Muller). An index would have been useful as well.

Quibblings aside, *The Pastor of New Mexico* is a valuable addition to our knowledge of immigrants, parish priests, and the Catholic Church in New Mexico in the first half of the twentieth century. Often-read copies of these memoirs will be found on bookshelves in colleges, public libraries, and private collections for years to come.

The Heart of Las Cruces: History of St. Genevieve's Church

By Father Ricardo Bauzá, et al
Published by St. Genevieve's Parish

Review by John Taylor

In 1849, a company of U.S. Army Dragoons first laid out El Pueblo del Jardín de Las Cruces (The City of the Garden of the Crosses) at the foot of the Organ Mountains. Folklore has it that the settlement was named for crosses that had been erected at the location to memorialize a bishop, a priest, three choir boys, four trappers, a Spanish army officer, and a captain who had been ambushed and killed there sometime in the 17th century. As a part of the village layout, one block was set aside for a Roman Catholic Church. In 1858, Jean Baptiste Lamy, the newly appointed bishop of the Diocese of Santa Fe, assigned Father Manuel Chávez as a priest for the new parish of Las Cruces, and Chávez immediately set about building a permanent church for his flock. Because construction began on January 3, 1859, the new parish was dedicated to St. Genevieve, the patron saint of Paris, whose feast day is January 3.

There can be no greater gift that parishioners can give to their parish than the knowledge of the history of their church, its fixtures, its families, its traditions, and its religious and secular leaders. The new book, "The Heart of Las Cruces: History of St. Genevieve's Church" is just such a gift. Father Ricardo Bauzá and his team have produced a remarkable biography of the church from its earliest conception to the present-day. The richly illustrated and carefully referenced text integrates the history of St. Genevieve's with that of southern New Mexico and Las Cruces. It shares both successes such as the construction of the beautiful new church building in 1887 and challenges such as the demolition of the much-beloved structure in 1967 when flaws in the original construction forced the condemnation of the structure.

The text is highly readable, although infrequently a bit preachy, and should be of interest to both Catholics and non-Catholics. The book was published in 2014 by St. Genevieve's parish and is available either directly from the parish (100 S. Espina, Las Cruces, NM 88001) or on Amazon.com.

THE PEACE CORPS IN NEW MEXICO

By Richard Melzer



Left to right, Pat D. Cahill, Brad Whipple, and John Deason were trained to use surveying equipment as part of their Peace Corps training at UNM.

Nearly every American alive in the early 1960s remembers the 17

most stirring words in John F. Kennedy's inaugural address: "Ask not what your country can do for you. Ask what you can do for your country."

Based on this historic challenge, President Kennedy issued Executive Order #10924, creating the Peace Corps on March 1, 1961. Well received across the nation, the Peace Corps became a centerpiece of Kennedy's New Frontier.

Thousands of young Americans volunteered for the exciting chance to serve their country by assisting underdeveloped communities in Latin America, Asia, and Africa. The application process was extremely competitive; only one in five applicants were accepted. Communists, "beatniks," and drunkards were automatically rejected, according to Peace Corps regulations.

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TRAVELS WITH THE HSNM PRESIDENT

Janet Saiers Visits Western Socorro County

I had the opportunity to spend August 3-5, 2015, in the Magdalena area at the Concho Hills guest ranch. Historical Society of New Mexico member, and an award-winning author/historian, Sherry Robinson was my travel partner. Because of recent rain, the grass and ground cover from Socorro to Magdalena is literally bright green and beautiful. Highlights of the trip included visiting the Kelly ghost town and abandoned mine just south of Magdalena, the Magdalena Library housed in their 1915 train depot, and the boxcar Magdalena "Museum," and touring the 1913 Ilfeld Warehouse across the street from the Depot. I made some interesting contacts for HSNM and I could write much more but I'll start with some highlights.

THE ILFELD WAREHOUSE

This building is very similar to the Ilfeld Warehouse in Santa Rosa, which some of us visited after the February 2015 Board meeting. The warehouse was bought by the Brown family in 1970. Mr. Brown was a salesman for the Ilfeld Company and covered eastern New Mexico. Clark Brown, his son, has maintained the building in very good condition, using it for storage and appliance repair. The open elevator still operates from basement to the second floor with ropes. Clark Brown's office had all kinds of Ilfeld memorabilia and a set of *New Mexico Historical Reviews* going back to issue # 5 in 1930. I told Clark he had a lot of valuable historic items and I will stay in touch with him.

THE TRAIN DEPOT

This structure is in excellent condition. Part of one wall has the New Mexico southwest collection. It included David Caffey's Santa Fe Ring book, B.G. Burr's Socorro book, Sherry Robinson's Apache book and several Bullis and Melzer books. I met the head of their Library Committee and they are

interested in forming a Magdalena Historical Society or Friends of Magdalena History. I told her I could help and HSNM would be supportive and encouraging. I gave her some copies of the *La Crónica* which were in my car.

BOXCAR MUSEUM

This is adjacent to the Depot and kept locked unless people ask the librarian to open it. It has a mix of clothing, railroad items, school items, a few pieces of furniture, photographs, etc.

KELLY GHOST TOWN & MINE

This was an operating mine until the 1940s. Kelly was a larger town than Magdalena with a population of 2,700 in the 1920s. You can drive up the road to the Catholic Church which is the only building still standing. After that a 4-wheel-drive vehicle would be better. There are lots of rock and brick foundations still there along with the large tall metal structure which is over a mine shaft. The Kelly mines are also known as the source of Smithsonite, a beautiful aqua-green colored mineral.

CONCHO HILLS GUEST RANCH

(www.conchohills.com)

The owners, Tim and Marilyn Norris, come from backgrounds as nuclear engineers. They have been involved with the purchase of the hunting lodge and construction of a six-room guest building, which just opened in April. They are interested in ranching and ranching-skills culture which is part of their guest experience. They give horse riding lessons and trail rides. They are interested in HSNM and I gave them copies of *La Crónica*.

INCREDIBLE NIGHT SKY WITH STARS & MILKY WAY

I had never been in an area with no spillover light. Both nights we experienced the dark skies where one literally views millions of stars. It was breathtaking. ~JS

Peace Corps ... (continued from page 2)

Valencia County Volunteers

Several Valencia County, New Mexico, residents joined the Peace Corps in the 1960s. They included Jerry Jaramillo, Bill Kirby, Abe Peña, Francisco Sisneros, and Ernie Orona. Each volunteer asserted that joining the Peace Corps was a major turning point in his life.

Bill Kirby called his work in Colombia a "tremendous experience." According to Jerry Jaramillo, his Peace Corps service in Costa Rica was "the best experience of my life." Francisco Sisneros, who worked in Honduras, wrote "As a result of my Peace Corps service, I learned a lot about myself, and I gained a more profound understanding and appreciation of how other people make do in their daily lives with so little. Also, for many reasons my perspective of the United States changed to one of even greater appreciation."

By 1963, President Kennedy was so impressed by the volunteers' early work that he declared, "Nothing carries the spirit of American idealism and expresses our hopes better and more effectively to the far corners of the earth than the Peace Corps."

A Training Center at UNM

But before Peace Corps volunteers could serve overseas, they had to be properly trained. Universities across the United States vied for the opportunity to serve as Peace Corps training centers.

The University of New Mexico, with its already strong ties to Latin America, applied to be among the Peace Corps' first training centers in the Southwest. According to UNM President Tom Popejoy, "The university never had been so interested in a particular project."

UNM was chosen as a short-term training center in 1961 and as a year-round training facility in November 1962. Dr. David Benedetti served as the project's first director. Dr. Marshall Nason also played a major leadership role. Hodgkin Hall, the oldest building on campus, was chosen as the Peace Corps' headquarters on campus.

Who Volunteered?

Early volunteers in the UNM program fit a definite profile. Baldwin G. Burr, who worked as student chauffeur for the volunteers, could recognize a new volunteer from a far distance. Part of his job was to pick up new volunteers when they first arrived at the Albuquerque Sunport.

"I stood with a sign that read, 'Peace Corps Volunteers,' but I didn't need them to come to me," Burr recalls. "I could spot them a mile away. They were young, idealistic, opinionated, middle class and lost." All were eager to begin their training for the work that lay ahead.

Some volunteers had very personal reasons for joining the Peace Corps. Elena Radley of Chicago joined in September 1963 shortly after graduating from college because her brother, 22-year-old Larry Radley, had been one of the

first to answer President Kennedy's call for volunteers.

Tragically, Larry and a fellow American were the first volunteers to die while serving in the Peace Corps. Their plane crashed in the Colombian mountains on April 22, 1962. Elena joined the corps and trained at UNM to continue Larry's work and "as my way of honoring his life and death." Fittingly, Elena served in Bogota, Colombia, from 1964 to 1965. Her brother, Gordon, served in Africa.

Rigorous Training

Once on campus, single volunteers were taken to live in student dorms, while married volunteers lived in married student housing apartments. Groups of 35 to 80 trainees went through the program together to better prepare them for service in a specific host country. Most groups had about equal numbers of men and women, although one all-female contingency of 35 women trained for service in Brazil in 1963.

Peace Corps training was intentionally rigorous. Sometimes compared to an army boot camp, the training program was designed to prepare volunteers for the hard work that lay ahead in poor, undeveloped countries that bore little resemblance to the affluent communities most volunteers had grown up in. The tough training program was also meant to weed out volunteers who were physically or psychologically not prepared for the trials that awaited them in foreign lands.

Training lasted four months. It included early morning calisthenics, followed by classes on world cultures, the dangers of communism, and especially foreign languages. With most volunteers destined for Latin American countries, volunteers were immersed in Spanish, studying the language for as many as four hours a day in the classroom. At meals, trainees sat with native speakers and conversed in Spanish only. Each day ended with briefings and group discussions.

Volunteers spent many additional hours training to assist their host countries in community development, public health, or education. Volunteers practiced their new skills in towns like Taos and Chama and at the D. H. Lawrence Ranch in the mountains of northern New Mexico.

Physical training was also important. In what was called "outward bound" exercises, male and female volunteers learned to read maps, remain safe in the wilderness, and climb cliffs, a skill they practiced by rappelling down the steep walls of old Zimmerman Stadium. Off campus, they went on demanding hikes up trails in the Sandia Mountains, the Manzano Mountains, the Pecos Wilderness and to the top of Wheeler Peak, the highest peak in New Mexico.

Weeks in Belen

In another effort to expose volunteers to the Spanish language and native cultures, many volunteers were sent to nearby communities to visit with local families for a week at a time.



The seven Peace Corps volunteers who became lost in the Manzano Mountains were left to right top row: Bill Pastreich, Mike Mitchell, and Bruce McCracken; left to right bottom row: Sue Selbin, Judy Johnson, Jane Whitmore, and Linda West.

At least five families in Belen graciously welcomed Peace Corps volunteers into their homes. Dr. and Mrs. Matt Baca, Mr. and Mrs. Manuel Gallegos, Mr. and Mrs. Nestor Gallegos, Mr. and Mrs. Ernest Sanchez, Sr., and Mr. and Mrs. Avalisio Ulibarri opened their homes to the out-of-state youths. Each family has fond memories of the young men and women who stayed with them, practiced speaking Spanish, and sampled local Hispanic food and culture.

Ernest and Libby Sanchez had eight children of their own, but welcomed several volunteers, believing that their children would benefit from the experience as much as, if not more than, the volunteers themselves.

All of the Sanchez children liked their guests for one or more good reasons. Mike Sanchez remembered one volunteer because he knew how to fly kites. He also liked a certain female volunteer because she was so pretty. Albert Sanchez liked one volunteer so much that he cried when the volunteer left.

Ernest, Jr., and all the Sanchez children liked the especially good meals their mother served with the \$60 weekly allotment their family received from the Peace Corps. In addition to their traditional beans and chile, the family had more salads and even grapefruit served with cherries on top. Libby Sanchez wrote in her memoir of preparing "fancy meals" and setting "tablecloths on the table" when the volunteers visited her home.

The volunteers undoubtedly benefited as well. Ernest Sanchez took them to see various parts of the county, including Isleta Pueblo. They met many local people, practiced their language skills, and felt the love of a large, close-knit family. Ernest and Libby Sanchez invited 15 of the volunteers back to celebrate Christmas. Much like foreign exchange students, many volunteers stayed in touch with the Sanchezes and other host families for years to come.

Selected Out

All went well for most volunteers during their training at UNM. But there were exceptions. In 1963 about a third of the volunteers at UNM were "selected out," a euphe-

mism for being cut from the program before their training period had ended.

Some volunteers had medical problems, including injuries suffered during their tough training schedule. A number could not adjust to taking orders or working well in groups. Language problems prevented several from reaching their goal of working overseas.

A good many left the program after they spent time in Juarez, Mexico. Unlike the relative comfort they encountered at UNM and in the homes of their hosts in Belen, volunteers faced true poverty and misery in Juarez. Baldwin G. Burr, who drove them to and from Mexico, recalls that many told him on their return trip to UNM that they intended to quit the Peace Corps. They recounted many hardships, but most often complained of the harsh smell of the barrios they had had to live in. They had faced the brutal reality of poverty and realized they simply could not deal with it.

The Saddest Day

Elena Radley called November 22, 1963, her saddest day as a Peace Corps volunteer. It was, in fact, the saddest day for all Peace Corps volunteers and the nation as a whole.

Elena had been assigned to a small town near Albuquerque to live with a Spanish-speaking family and work as a classroom assistant in the local school. She recalls that the children ran into the classroom during lunchtime, yelling, "They've shot the president!" No one could believe the terrible news until it was confirmed on the radio. The principal closed the school, sending everyone home to be with their families.

Elena went home to the family she was staying with. Elena recalled that the family's mother "greeted me with a huge embrace with tears streaming down her face." The house was soon filled with friends and relatives who "ate and cried and comforted each other." Below a picture of President Kennedy that hung on the walls of so many Hispanic homes, they "talked about JFK and all he had done to give everyone hope for the great possibilities of America."

Elena and her fellow Peace

continued on page 4

Peace Corps ... (continued from page 3)

Corps volunteers, fondly known as "Kennedy's Kids," were ordered back to UNM where they huddled together in shock. "We could not believe that such a strong and powerful light had been extinguished.... Our innocent faith in endless possibilities was shattered."

A Challenge in the Manzanos

Somehow the trainees—and the nation—recovered from the president's assassination and carried on to face new, often unexpected challenges in their lives.

A group of nine Peace Corps volunteers faced one such challenge just two years after President Kennedy's death. The group included Tom Jacobs, Judy Johnson, Bruce McCracken, Mike Mitchell, Bill Pastreich, Sue Selbin, Linda West, Jane Whitmore, and an unnamed fifth female trainee. By December of 1965 the volunteers had completed nine weeks of their training in preparation for service in Chile.

Accompanied by an instructor, the group was one of three teams that were given maps and directions to hike over the Manzano Mountains on a four-day, 30-mile journey from the eastern foothills to a destination on the west side of the range. According to a Peace Corps official, challenges like these were meant to help "eliminate volunteers who would not be good risks overseas."

All went well as the group left from Belen on Thursday, December 9. But then a female volunteer injured her ankle soon after the strenuous hike began. The group's experienced instructor transported her to Albuquerque for medical attention.

The remaining trainees forged ahead. They now included four men and four women, aged 21 to 28, with an average age of 23. All eight were from states back East; half were from New York City or its suburbs.

As a former Boy Scout, only Bruce McCracken of Massachusetts had had any hiking or camping experience. McCracken later recalled, "The others had never climbed anything higher than Boston's Beacon Hill," about 80 feet.

But at least the trainees were

well-supplied. The group carried pup tents, sleeping bags, ponchos, warm clothing, camping tools, a lantern, a first aid kit, a compass, and a map.

None of these items proved sufficient for what lay ahead. The volunteers encountered rain, snow, ice, and temperatures that dipped as low as 15 degrees Fahrenheit. Unfortunately, they found their map to be "deceiving." By Saturday they were lost and running low on food. They drank melted snow for water.

The volunteers decided to send Bill Pastreich up a peak to see if he could determine their location. Darkness fell before he could return. The group had to "talk" Pastreich back to their makeshift camp by yelling to him for two hours. Jane Whitmore later recalled that everyone was "a little scared" as the wind howled and the danger of their plight set in that Saturday night. The volunteers got little sleep as they gathered around their campfire.

The lost trainees continued to search for safety on Sunday, December 12. But, as Linda West later explained, "We would go over one mountain and there would just be another one." Discouraged, the group took a vote and decided to turn back rather than go any further in the Manzanos.

Search Party Organized

Meanwhile, Peace Corps leaders grew concerned when two of the three hiking groups arrived at their destination on the east of the mountains, but the third one did not. Worried, UNM Peace Corps director David Benedetti nevertheless expressed confidence that the volunteers' resourcefulness and "outward bound" training would help them endure whatever calamity they faced.

An 80-100 man search party was quickly organized. The search party included Forest Service rangers, New Mexico state police and many local men who often hunted and hiked in the Manzanos and knew the area well. Ann McCracken, Bruce McCracken's bride of four months and a fellow trainee, joined the search team after her team had completed the mountain trip on schedule. Search

planes and a helicopter flew overhead.

Hazardous conditions and thick clouds made the search increasingly difficult. Searchers focused on the east side of the mountains where they assumed the trainees would be by the fourth day of their hike.

But the eight volunteers were on the western slope of the Manzanos. By Monday morning they had come across a locked house on the Sedillo family ranch, not far from where they had started their long trek five days earlier. Having eaten their last bit of food (dehydrated eggs and ham), they were tempted to kill the two turkeys they found on the property. Somehow they resisted the temptation, although they had been taught how to kill chickens and rabbits as part of their survival training. The trainees thought it would just be a matter of time before the ranch family returned to their house and, hopefully, provided assistance.

Found at Last

The group's luck changed on Monday, December 13, when Joe Perea and three other new searchers en route to the mountains passed by the Sedillo ranch house and found the volunteers at last. They were said to be "hungry, cold and wet, but their spirits were high." Suffering only minor cuts and bruises, the eight young men and women were taken to the health center at UNM where they were examined, cared for, and soon released. They eagerly ate their first full meal in days, said to include lots of hamburgers and apples.

Explaining how they had escaped their harrowing ordeal, Jane Whitmore told reporters, "We had good morale and everyone worked well together. When we had differences of opinion—and we had some—we would just take a vote and do what the majority thought best."

The trainees' Peace Corps preparations had clearly paid off in this emergency. Not requiring additional rest or medical attention, all eight returned to their regular training schedule on Tuesday, the day after they had been discov-

ered. None wanted their wilderness encounter to prevent them from achieving their original goal: to "do for your country," as President Kennedy had asked.

Newspapers, from the *New York Times* on the East Coast to the *San Diego Union* on the West Coast, announced the good news of the volunteers' survival and recovery. Walter Cronkite reported the story on his nightly TV newscast.

One trainee, Bruce McCracken, wrote an article about his group's ordeal for his hometown newspaper, the *Boston Traveler*. McCracken took his experience in stride, writing, "It was just one of those circumstances." He seemed far more disturbed that his wife, Ann, had succeeded in crossing the mountains, while he had not. "My wife ribbed me about her making it and me getting lost." It's one of those things she probably never let him forget throughout their years of marriage.

Trail's End

UNM remained an important Peace Corps training center for several years. Over 1,800 volunteers trained at the university in the four-year period, 1962-66. The well-prepared volunteers served in eight Latin American countries plus Cameroon in Central Africa and Afghanistan in Central Asia. Smaller programs at New Mexico State University and Western New Mexico University trained additional volunteers. For various reasons, the program at UNM ended in 1966, although the school's ties to Latin America remain strong to this day.

Many federal programs have been criticized as wasteful and unnecessary. In contrast, few programs have been as popular and productive as the Peace Corps. The Peace Corps has had its share of bumps and bruises, but it remains a great example of what our country, its youth and some generous families of, Valencia County can achieve when given the best resources, proper training, and widespread public support.

FROM LA CRÓNICA, ISSUE NO. 1

A New Mexico Vignette

By W. Thetford LeViness
(Edited by Don Bullis)

This is a dramatic story told me by Pablo Abeyta [born in 1871] shortly before his death in 1940. Pablo was a grand old cacique of Isleta.... The story concerns a visit which Theodore Roosevelt is supposed to have made there while he was President.

Isleta is a community of adobe houses and sacred kivas which dates from prehistoric times. Its Roman Catholic mission, also of adobe, was built before 1629 and has as good a claim as any to being the oldest church in the United States. Pablo had a reputation for exaggeration and embellishment,

but here are the details as he gave them:

Col. Roosevelt had lived on some range land he owned in the Dakotas before the Spanish-American War. He'd met many of the Indians there, and had learned well the rugged ways of the Westerner. When he began to recruit "Rough Riders" from his headquarters in the East, he chose a large number from the West and the Southwest. Pablo, who held a position of high honor in the pueblo, had helped him get some Indian enlistments. Also, he'd taken a personal liking to popular

"T. R." when he met him, presumably at San Antonio [Texas] where the amiable colonel went to train the "Rough Riders."

Pablo invited him to visit his home on the river [Rio Grande]. The pressure of war was too great for that, but Roosevelt promised that he'd go to Isleta on some trip to New Mexico in the future.

Victory at San Juan Hill, election as Vice-President, and an assassin's bullet soon moved Teddy Roosevelt to the White House in Washington. A few years later he spent some time in Albuquerque on a trip to the West Coast, accompanied by a train-load of top-ranking government advisers and secret service [sic] men. The country had just lost one President by foul play [William McKinley was

assassinated on September 6, 1901], and no risks involving unnecessary exposure were being taken.

But the nation's Chief Executive [sic] did not forget his promise to Pablo. He sent a special messenger to Isleta to get him.

Pablo wouldn't ride in the liveried carriage sent by the President of the United States. Instead he said, "Tell him to wait. I'll be there." With that, he hitched up a team of horses to a dilapidated wagon and set out on the tortuous chuck-hole trail to Albuquerque.

Arriving without official escort, he fairly waded through a hotel lobby spilling over with secret service men and local constables, none of whom knew who he was. He finally reached the door of the

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THE SAGA OF THE TULAROSA BASIN HISTORICAL SOCIETY AND THE PLAZA BUILDING IN ALAMOGORDO, NEW MEXICO

By Dawn Santiago

In 1964, a group of civic-minded citizens of Alamogordo, New Mexico, came together over a shared concern that local history was being lost. As a result, they organized the Tularosa Basin Historical Society (TBHS) with the mission of preserving the history of Alamogordo, Otero County, and the Tularosa Basin. Their goal was to open a museum; consequently, they started looking for ways to finance the construction of a building. Unfortunately, funds were slow to come in. Then, in 1969, the Alamogordo Chamber of Commerce stepped in and proposed they finance the construction of an extension to the Chamber's building at 1301 N. White Sands Boulevard that could house the museum. With this step, the founders of the Society saw their vision become a reality with the opening of the Tularosa Basin Historical Society Museum in January of 1971.

Under the direction of the first director, Gertrude Painter, the museum thrived, accepting donations of artifacts, documents, and photographs. Visitors came to explore the new exhibits that Painter and other volunteers created; researchers came to use the new archival collection as well. However, TBHS hit rough times after the retirement of Painter in 1984. Interest in the mission of the Society waned, and by 1996, the possibility of closing the museum and disbanding the Society loomed. A call to the community, fortunately, was answered by a new generation of citizens who wanted to preserve the organization, its mission, and its collections.

The organization blossomed under new board leadership and two directors who volunteered their time and talents. Initially, Kathy Gren sat at the helm, but she was soon followed by a retired kindergarten teacher, Mildred Evaskovich, who served from 1998 to 2004 when she retired. Through the diligent efforts of Evaskovich, the museum's collections were organized, volunteers were recruited and received professional museum training, an active oral history program was launched, and exhibits were redone. In response to the all-volunteer museum operating on a professional basis, the Tularosa Basin Historical Society Museum became known as an area attraction, resulting in a dramatic rise in visitation by tourists and locals alike.

In addition to the revived museum, the Tularosa Basin Historical Society became a thriving organization with many programs and activities. They began to hold quarterly programs featuring a variety of presentations on various aspects of regional history and culture. The Society also commenced publishing a quarterly newsletter to keep membership

apprised of the Society's and museum's many activities. In addition, TBHS established a monograph publication, *Pioneer*, to provide a venue for researchers to publish their materials while disseminating regional history to a wider audience.

As TBHS enjoyed this new prosperity and enthusiastic response from the public, they faced a continual problem—not enough storage, exhibit, or work space. Storage was limited to a small narrow space off of the one small office. The size of the collections had grown exponentially with the revival of the museum, but despite using every technique possible to store collections safely, the museum was bursting at the seams. Preservation of the collections was difficult as they could not really be stored per museum standards, nor rotated off exhibit to rest the artifacts, nor were there any environmental controls.

Recognizing the situation early on, the TBHS Board of Directors continually searched for a way to solve this problem. To them, the best solution was to acquire a new building, but as with the first Society board, this latest board faced a similar large stumbling block—lack of finances and possible location. But in hopes of an opportunity in the future, TBHS created a building fund to which monies were deposited from designated donations and fundraisers.

Then, in late 2005, that opportunity arose. Earlier that year Billy "Bud" Weiman, a businessman of Alamogordo, passed away, and his widow, Alice Weiman, began to divest some of her husband's investment properties. One of these was the Plaza Building, a 1937 or 1938 building located on one of the most historic locations of the city, the northeast corner of 10th Street and White Sands Boulevard. Recognizing the historic nature of the building, Mrs. Weiman wanted the structure to be a museum or at least appreciated and preserved. Consequently, she approached the Tularosa Basin Historical Society, offering to sell it at below market price.

The proposal intrigued the Board. In studying the matter, the board realized that the site filled several needs of the museum: 1) the building was much larger than its current location; 2) the location was on the main intersection of Alamogordo, considered the gateway into the city; and 3) it helped the Society fulfill its mission by preserving an iconic piece of Alamogordo's history. The larger building would allow TBHS to expand and improve their collections and exhibit space, including adding environmental controls to protect its artifacts, documents, and photographs. The idea of a museum on this corner also melded with the theme of the intersection of 10th Street and White Sands

Boulevard, where historic, educational, and cultural features already graced two of the four corners. For the city, it enhanced the idea that the intersection was the entrance to the downtown from the relief route to the west.

What made the Plaza Building such an iconic landmark in Alamogordo? The location is part of Block 50, which represents a unique aspect of Alamogordo's history. The city was founded in 1898 as a railroad town by Charles Bishop Eddy, John Arthur Eddy, and William Ashton Hawkins. The new town served as a division headquarters of the El Paso and Northeastern Railway, which the Eddy brothers and Hawkins owned. They planned for it to be a model community, where the rhythm of commerce and social life revolved around the railroad

and its supporting services. To accomplish this, the men and other partners formed the Alamogordo Improvement Company.

In designing the town, the founders placed a mile-long beautiful buffer between the railroad to the west and the town to the east, today's Alameda Park which runs north from 10th Street. At the intersection of 10th Street and White Sands Boulevard (originally named Pennsylvania Street), the northwest corner initially served as the entrance to Alameda Park, but today is the parking and entrance to the Alamogordo Zoo. The railroad's depot, headquarters offices, and shops lay on the southwest corner, but today these buildings are gone, replaced by a retail shopping center. Located on the southeast corner, where a commercial

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President's suite upstairs, only to be told that Roosevelt was busy and couldn't see him. He was still struggling with the doorman when a familiar voice called out, "Is that you, Pablo?" It was his old friend Teddy, and he was immediately ushered in for a pow-wow.

"Look," said Roosevelt, "I want to visit your home in Isleta. But I'm President now, and those darned secret service men follow me everywhere I go. I don't want them down there getting into everything and scaring your people. If only we could go alone...."

Pablo sat in silence for a few moments, then said, "I got idea [sic]. You show me back stairs to the hotel?" Roosevelt summoned an aide, and a back staircase was soon found. "You wait here, Mr. President!" Pablo disappeared down the stairs and headed for his horses and wagon.

Five minutes later he returned with a large and colorful blanket he'd had stored away under the seat. He threw it around the President and led him down the same back stairs and across the street to the place where his team was waiting. Not even the most alert of the secret service men recognized "the Indian with the walrus mustache."

The man of the soft voice and the big stick [a reference to Roosevelt's foreign policy] rode the chuck-hole trail with Pablo, spent about an hour in his home, toured the pueblo, and was back in Albuquerque and up the back stairs to his hotel room before any of his bodyguards knew he was gone. It's the only time in history that an Indian ever "kidnapped" a U.S. President—and under the very noses of the Secret Service at that!

Pablo told this story to many people, but it does not appear in any standard biography of the late President. It's a tale told by an Indian, though, that just could be true. Roosevelt was in New Mexico several times, both during his term in the White House and afterward. His admiration and respect for America's "first citizens" is well known.

Pablo Abeyta headed several delegations to Washington in the interest of his tribe. He got to know every President from Grover Cleveland to Franklin D. Roosevelt, with the exception of Mr. Coolidge. He said he liked Teddy the best.

I met Pablo early in 1940, soon after I heard him speak at the dedication of some Indian ruins near Albuquerque [Coronado State Monument near Bernalillo was dedicated on May 29, 1940. It is now known as Coronado Historic Site]. I wrote up the ceremonies for the *Santa Fe Capitol-Examiner*, and gave Pablo quite a big play. He sent me a letter of appreciation and asked me to go see him. He was postmaster at Isleta at the time [and] proprietor of a general store.... It was while weighing packages and selling stamps that he told me about "T. R." and I saw him only once after that since he died the next fall. He took me back of the store to the rooms where he said the President had come. Whether fact or the product of a fertile imagination and a gift for story-telling, he had newspaper clippings to show that, anyhow, he'd entertained the King and Queen of the Belgians there.

W. Thetford LeViness was a well-known writer about Santa Fe [and other New Mexico subjects, including the Penitentes] during the 1930's-1970's, and although confined to a wheel chair for his entire life, he was able to travel and write extensively. He received a BA degree from Saint John's College in Annapolis, Maryland, and an MA in Journalism from Columbia University.... He first came to Santa Fe in the early 1930's on a W.P.A. Writers' Project.

(Editor's note: According to an obituary in the *Santa Fe New Mexican*, September 10, 1971, W. Thetford LeViness, also known as "W. T." and "Ted," died of a stroke at his home in Santa Fe at age 58. He spent his life in a wheel chair as a result of cerebral palsy. He wrote and published a book entitled *The Truth About the Penitentes* in 1970.)

building once stood, is the City of Alamogordo's Founder's Park that is decorated with brass busts and plaques recognizing the contributions of key persons throughout the city's history.

In drawing up the plat map for the town of Alamogordo, John Arthur Eddy, representing the Alamogordo Improvement Company, included a "temperance feature" involving the city block at the northeast corner of the 10th Street and White Sands Boulevard intersection. This feature confined the sale of liquor to Lots 1, 2, 3, and 4 of Block 50 (the southwest corner of the block) for "medicinal purposes" only, and in a "place of public resort." Rather than being prohibitionists, the Eddy brothers were just being practical and did not want a work force of drunkards and layabouts. Alamogordo folklore also relates that the lawyer William Ashton Hawkins suggested placing it across the street from the headquarters' offices so the bosses could keep an eye on who visited the saloon.

The Alamogordo Improvement Company retained ownership of the lots and in 1899 built the first building on the site, a simple frame building with a pitch roof. The building was 18 feet by 48 feet, and the southern portion contained the saloon and the northern part the billiard's parlor. There were two outbuildings for beer storage and coal storage. The Company did not operate the business, but franchised it out receiving the rent and a portion of the saloon's profits. However, the business was never very successful as the workers did not want to drink and play billiards under the watchful eye of their bosses just across the street. Instead, they went to the drinking establishments that popped up just south of the town's boundaries that the Company could not control.

The Block 50 saloon limped along for almost twenty years when it had to become just a billiard's parlor after New Mexico banned liquor sales in 1918, followed by the federal Volstead Act which ushered in Prohibition in 1920. With the repeal of Eighteenth Amendment in 1933, the Alamogordo Improvement Company leased the saloon to Gus Anxion and I. N. Wiley of Las Cruces, but the business still did not bring in much money as Alamogordo was in the depths of the Great Depression.

By 1937 the Alamogordo Improvement Company needed money to survive and with a new generation of owners, the impetus to keep Lots 1-4 of Block 50 for liquor sales had waned. Consequently, that year they sold the lots to G. E. Gordon and W. F. Shelton, two businessmen who owned the Buick auto dealership. Under the name of Plaza Oil Company, Gordon and Shelton built a gas station and garage on the northeast corner of 10th Street and White Sands Boulevard.

The two men also worked with Howard Beacham to build an "L"-

shaped adobe structure on the space behind the gas station. Although strictly a private enterprise, the resulting Pueblo Revival/New Mexico Vernacular-style building is architecturally similar to local Works Project Administration buildings, namely the Alamogordo Woman's Club, the United States Post Office (now Otero County offices), and the headquarters offices at the White Sands National Monument. The north wing of the new Plaza Building became the bar, while the east wing became a restaurant owned and operated by Beacham himself.

In December 1946, Leroy Hightower purchased the Plaza Cafe from Beacham. He closed the restaurant briefly for remodeling, opening again in January of 1947. To help the restaurant stand out on the busy Highway 54, Hightower added exterior lighting and neon lighting to outline the building. After purchasing the old motor company building to the east of Plaza Cafe, he cut a door to have access between the two and enclosed an area between the two wings of the Plaza Building, creating a storeroom and passage between the Plaza Bar and the cafe. As the town grew rapidly in the 1950s to a population around 25,000, the Plaza Bar and Cafe became the hub of Alamogordo, where the business and political leaders gathered for a good meal or a quick drink at the bar.

Over the next thirty years, the Plaza Building became a landmark of Alamogordo's downtown. Nevertheless, Alamogordo was changing. The town's economy had always mainly revolved around farming, ranching, and the railroad. Then, in 1942 the U.S. military opened Alamogordo Army Air Field, which became Holloman Air Force Base in 1946. Alamogordo grew rapidly over the next several decades. However, after 1970 changes in the air base's mission and rough economic times nationally adversely effected the town's economy. As a result of these harder times, combined with the death of Leroy Hightower in 1988, the Plaza Cafe closed. The Plaza Bar remained open while the old cafe area was leased out to a variety of businesses.

The building itself had also changed hands over the years. At some point a Herbert White owned it, and later, probably in the late 1960s, Guy and Velma Inks and her father Earl Creighton purchased the Plaza Building. Then in 1997, Billy G. Weiman received a quiet title to Lots 1-4 of Block 50. With his death in 2005, the opportunity arose for the Plaza Building to potentially become home of the Alamogordo Museum of History operated by the Tularosa Basin Historical Society.

Seizing this chance, the board of TBHS met with officials of the City of Alamogordo to see if the two entities could come to an agreement for the city to buy the Plaza Building for TBHS to operate

a larger museum. The location of 10th Street and White Sands Boulevard had become the designated entry into the historic district of Alamogordo during the city's centennial in 1998. Two of the corners, the southeast and northwest, already contained cultural and tourist attractions (Founder's Park and the Alamogordo Zoo, respectively), and the Plaza area would also help draw visitors into town. The city agreed, and authorized TBHS to proceed in applying for capital outlay funds from the New Mexico Legislature to allow the City of Alamogordo to purchase the building.

Working with then State Senator Diana Duran and State Representative Gloria Vaughn, TBHS was successful in receiving \$303,000 for the city to purchase the property. At that time, TBHS formally leased the building from the city and began making plans to restore and renovate the structure to become a museum. Architect Charles Nolan, designer of the New Mexico Museum of Space History in Alamogordo, offered his service pro bono, drawing on his experience in projects in Santa Fe and other places involving historic buildings. With an initial assessment in hand of what work was required, the TBHS board, on behalf of the City of Alamogordo, once again petitioned the state legislature for capital outlay money, receiving a total of \$247,000.

In the spring of 2008, Dr. David Townsend along with two city officials made a presentation to the Southeast Regional Planning Organization (SERPO) to request funds to improve and enhance the exterior of the building, signage, and its parking lot, as well as make the sidewalks ADA compliant. His presentation was successful, and the project was put on the list for FY2010, in which SERPO would provide \$150,000 and the City of Alamogordo would contribute \$50,000.

With plans and money in hand, TBHS started to prepare for renovations. Since having formally taken over the building in 2006, the Society had allowed the two current businesses, the Plaza Pub and a flower shop, to continue leasing their respective spaces. In the spring of 2008, TBHS and the City terminated the leases, vacating the building. Next, the City of Alamogordo put out a request for bids so restoration could begin. However, the bids received were much higher than what funds were available. After prioritizing the work needed to be done, a second request for bid was sent out, but once again the bids were too high.

Months passed as the city officials and the board members of TBHS discussed how to proceed. In the spring of 2009, TBHS and the City looked to make sure the building was secure, but the roof appeared to be in need of repair. They had an asbestos study done, resulting in the discovery that there was potentially asbestos in the roof, adding another major

expense that had not been included in the other renovation expenses.

With this news, the TBHS board analyzed their current position. Due to the uncertainty of the situation, it was difficult for them to qualify for grants that might help with the brick-and-mortar renovations, nor could they easily conduct their own fundraiser. In the meantime, TBHS was still paying the insurance on the building, as per their lease. However, this expense was putting a strain on their budget, without anything to show for it. Therefore, reluctantly the board voted on June 10, 2009, to approach the City Commission at their June 22nd meeting to formally ask to be let out of their the lease. The city commissioners reluctantly agreed, but also directed city staff to look into all options and stay committed to the project of converting the Plaza Building into a museum.

Then in the fall of 2009, the project took another blow. A state budget shortfall due to the economic recession led the New Mexico state government to take back any unspent capital outlay funds for projects. This included the money earmarked for the restoration of the Plaza Building. For now, the renovation of the Plaza Building was dead in the water.

But the TBHS board would not give up on the dream of moving their museum, and they quietly worked and brainstormed on ways to revive the project. One idea put forward was for a General Obligation Bond to be placed on the city ballot where the resulting revenues could be used for the renovations. Then in late 2011, the City of Alamogordo refinanced their 2002 gross receipts tax bonds, generating \$4.2 million to be used on quality of life projects. Ultimately, the city included \$600,000 earmarked for the Plaza Building.

Things were looking up again—but a threat of storm clouds were on horizon. News was floating around Alamogordo that CVS Pharmacy was looking at purchasing the northeast corner of 10th Street and White Sands Blvd., not only the Plaza Building, but also the entire historic Block 50 of Alamogordo. Their plans were to raze the existing buildings to construct a CVS Pharmacy to fit their business model of being located near a Walgreens, which sat the southwest corner of the same intersection. At a City Commission in mid September 2011 the information was confirmed. TBHS board members addressed the commissioners asking for them remember that state capital outlay money was used to purchase the Plaza Building, with the purpose of creating a museum. However, the commission and audience was informed the agent for CVS Pharmacy, Armstrong Development Properties, had backed out of any arrangements with owners who had already expressed willingness

to sell, stating the Plaza Building was not available.

TBHS now worked even more fervently on plans to not just restore the Plaza Building, but save it from the wrecking ball. In January of 2012, Elizabeth Padilla, president of TBHS, made a presentation to the city commission to thank them for putting the museum on the list of quality of life projects to be paid for by the bond refinancing. She also wanted to apprise them that the Society was planning on trying to get the Plaza Building listed on the New Mexico State Register of Cultural Properties, a move that would open up opportunities for some grants.

With the renewed interest in the Plaza Building, TBHS board members and city officials continued to have discussions on how to proceed. However, since a sale to CVS Pharmacy was still a possibility, the city offered to use the \$600,000 from the quality of life money to obtain other vacant buildings in the downtown area that TBHS could use as a larger museum. TBHS board declined, seeing plenty of possibilities in listing the site on the state historic register.

But, since the city owned the property before TBHS could move forward they needed the city's permission to act on their behalf when applying for such status and for any grants that would cover the costs of a feasibility and structural study. Therefore, on March 27, 2012, Elizabeth Padilla and Josette Herrell, vice-president of TBHS, went before the City Commission to formally request permission. In addition, TBHS informed the commission that if the building achieved historic status, then renovation construction would be under a different set of regulations; therefore, construction costs would be dramatically reduced. After a long discussion about what restrictions such a status would put on the property and if it would impede selling the property in the future, the City Commission formally agreed that TBHS on behalf of the city had one year to pursue receiving historic register status and grants for study and renovation, with the \$600,000 quality of life funds to be used as matching funds.

But the situation was more complicated than it appeared. In the previous months the City of Alamogordo's Engineering Department, per the request of the city commission, had created their own estimate to renovate the Plaza Building and bring it up to code and ready for occupancy. Their estimate was \$1 million at minimum. Unbeknownst to TBHS and the public, the City Commission on March 13, 2012, had in executive session instructed city staff to list the Plaza property for sale on the real estate market. However, two weeks later the commissioners gave TBHS a one-year time period to pursue grants without mentioning the property was on the market. At the April 10th meeting, one commissioner tried to rectify this

conflict, but his motion to remove the property from the market failed. As it turned out, CVS Pharmacy was still interested in pursuing its project of taking over all of Block 50. Consequently, when it saw the Plaza property on the market, it made an offer to the city. This offer was addressed at the April 23rd meeting when the City Commission voted to instruct the city attorney not to accept an actual offer from CVS Pharmacy for the property, but to enter into negotiations.

After the actions of the City Commission, who had heard several members of the public speaking on behalf of TBHS's efforts, the town of Alamogordo was divided. Many saw the vacant building in the heart of downtown as an eyesore and welcomed the prospect of a new business. But others were tired of seeing their history obliterated, harking back to the contentious removal of the Alamogordo railroad depot and Aztec building in the 1990s at this same intersection. Even the *Alamogordo Daily News* joined the conversation by printing its own editorial calling out the commission for going back on their vote allowing TBHS a year's time to pursue funding.

In the meantime, TBHS, as it reminded its members and supporters to stay civil in the discussions, moved forward and applied for state historic status for the Plaza Building in April 2012. On May 22nd, Elizabeth Padilla once again approached the City Commission, this time asking for a letter of support directed to the State Historic Preservation Board which was to meet in early June at which time they were considering the Plaza Building application. After much discussion, the City Commission declined to write the letter of support, fearing it would impede any deal with CVS Pharmacy.

Despite this lack of support from the City of Alamogordo, TBHS pushed ahead, and in early June their application for the Plaza Building to be placed on the New Mexico State Register of Cultural Properties was accepted, opening the door to grant opportunities as an officially registered historic structure. In the meantime, the Otero County Commission had been watching the situation closely. County Commissioner Tommie Herrell, whose wife Josette was on the TBHS board, invited the Society to make a presentation at the County Commission meeting in January 2012. After watching the City of Alamogordo gradually withdraw their support in restoring the Plaza Building, the county commissioners at their June 13, 2012, meeting voted to authorize county staff to negotiate with the city for the county to take over the property.

The CVS Pharmacy project in late June was abandoned when two of the owners of property on Block 50 — Otero County and businessman Michael Shyne — categorically announced they would not sell their lots. With the

option to sell the Plaza Building off the table for now, the City Commission agreed on August 14th to transfer the property to Otero County on the condition that the property be used only as a county museum and that it would have to be completed in two years from the date of the conveyance. If these conditions were violated, the property would return to the City of Alamogordo. By September 22, 2012, the legalities of the conveyance were met and on September 22nd, the County Commission presented a copy of the quit claim deed to representatives of TBHS and gave them formal authorization to move forward with renovations. A TBHS member did approach the city commission one more time in December 3, 2012, asking for \$200,000, but the commissioners rejected this request, citing the events of the past year.

The volunteers of TBHS quickly acted, immediately cleaning up the inside and outside of the Plaza Building. Work had to stop temporarily in January 2013 when asbestos abatement had to be done. Workers had discovered that the sealant used to hold down the tile floor contained asbestos, but the good news was that it only cost \$5,500 to do the work, not the \$80,000 some early estimates had said. TBHS also paid for the work itself, not the county.

To keep moving forward, TBHS also held fundraisers, like the "Open Door" auction held in April of 2013. The Society invited the public to come take a look at their progress and the features of the building, and buy items at the auction to help raise money toward the next phase of construction. In addition, TBHS once again, with the help of State Representative Yvette Herrell, applied to the 2013 New Mexico State Legislature for capital outlay money and received \$525,000, \$25,000 more than they had actually requested.

After a year of more preparation work and waiting for the money to be made available by the state, in November of 2014 Otero County sent out a request for construction bids. Construction on the restoration of the Plaza Building began in late January by CD General Contractors of Las Cruces. In June of 2015, thanks to the efforts of now former County Commissioner Tommie Herrell, the inmates of the Otero County Prison Facility in Chaparral made a new steel gate for the new museum, to help separate the gift shop from the museum exhibits in a secure manner. OCPF Warden James Frauner and four employees delivered and help to install the gate. Designed by TBHS President Josette Herrell and Treasurer Debra Lewandowski, the gate features symbols of the Tularosa Basin: windmills, the railroad water tower in downtown Alamogordo, St. Francis de Paula Catholic Church in Tularosa, a train, Stealth Fighter, and White Sands. In addition in the summer of 2015, TBHS received a

\$20,000 PNM Resources Foundation grant and a \$3,000 donation from Union Pacific Railroad to help pay for renovation and construction costs. After being located at 1300 N. White Sands Boulevard for 44 1/2 years, the Tularosa Basin Historical Society/Alamogordo Museum of History closed its doors on July 25, 2015, in anticipation of a grand reopening in the Plaza Building in September as the Tularosa Basin History Museum.

Although the dream of moving into a larger facility had been many years in the making, the volunteers and members of the Tularosa Basin Historical Society never gave up. Once the opportunity came up to move into the Plaza Building, one of the historic landmarks in downtown Alamogordo, the TBHS board jumped at the chance to fulfill their mission of preserving the history of Alamogordo and the Tularosa Basin while also meeting the necessity of finding larger quarters. After ten years of ups and downs in the process, the Tularosa Basin Historical Society's perseverance will have paid off as they debut the new enlarged Alamogordo Museum of History in the summer of 2015.

(Dawn Santiago is member of the Historical Society of New Mexico Board of Directors. She also serves on the Society's Publications Committee. She is a long-time resident of southern New Mexico, and she served as curator for TBHS from 2004 to 2008.)

Plenary Speaker 2015



Travis Suazo, Executive Director of the Indian Pueblo Cultural Center in Albuquerque, delivered the address at the Plenary session of Historical Society of New Mexico 2015 Conference in Albuquerque. His presentation regarding Pueblo Indian educational issues was informative and interesting.

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2015 Award Winners

Photographs by Sherry Robinson



Andrés Armijo was the winner of the 2015 Historical Society of New Mexico's Fabiola Cabeza de Baca Award for outstanding publication or exhibit relating to domestic life in New Mexico for his book, *Family History in the Rio Abajo* (Rio Grande Books). Mr. Armijo is pictured here with HSNM President Janet Saiers.



Rick Hendricks, Richard W. Hughes, and Malcolm Ebright were the 2015 Historical Society of New Mexico's winners of the Fray Francisco Atanasio Dominguez Award for historic survey and research for their book, *Four Square Leagues: Pueblo Land in New Mexico* (University of New Mexico Press). Rick Hendricks and Richard Hughes are picture above with HSNM President Janet Saiers.



Nasario Garcia was the winner of the 2015 Historical Society of New Mexico's Pablita Velarde Award for outstanding children's publication for his book, *Grandma Lale's Tamales: A Christmas Story* (Rio Grande Books). Mr. Garcia is pictured above with HSNM President Janet Saiers.



Cipriano Frederico Vigil was the winner of the 2015 Historical Society of New Mexico's Ralph Emerson Twitchell Award for significant contribution to the field of history by individuals in the area of fine arts, for his book *New Mexico Folk Music: Treasures of a People* (University of New Mexico Press). Mr. Vigil is pictured above with HSNM President Janet Saiers.



David L. Caffey was the winner of the 2015 Historical Society of New Mexico's Gaspar Pérez de Villagrà

Award for outstanding publication by an individual for his book, *Chasing the Santa Fe Ring: Power and Privilege in Territorial New Mexico* (University of New Mexico Press). Mr. Caffey is pictured above with HSNM President Janet Saiers.



New Mexico author and artist Max Evans was the 2015 recipient of the Historical Society of New Mexico's Edgar Lee Hewett Award for outstanding service to the public for his many contributions over a long career and in particular for his efforts as a founder of the New Mexico Farm and Ranch Museum in Las Cruces. Mr. Evans is pictured above with HSNM President Janet Saiers and New Mexico historian Don Bullis.



Ann Carson was the winner of the 2015 Historical Society of New Mexico's L. Bradford Prince Award for significant work in the field of historic preservation for many Albuquerque historic projects. She is pictured above with HSNM President Janet Saiers.



Former Historical Society of New Mexico President Michael Stevenson was the winner of the society's Paul A. F. Walter Award for His many services to HSNM over a period of many years. He is pictured above with current HSNM President Janet Saiers.



Mo Sue L. Palmer was the winner of the Historical Society of New Mexico's Dorothy Woodward Award for the advancement of education for her numerous lectures and publications about New Mexico history. Ms. Palmer is pictured above with HSNM President Janet Saiers.