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Myra Ellen Jenkins, 1912-1993.

# In Passing: Myra Ellen Jenkins, 1916-1993

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JOHN W. GRASSHAM

Zealous guardian of New Mexico's historic documents and noted former State Historian, Myra Ellen Jenkins passed away after a brief illness at her Santa Fe home on June 22, 1993. Born September 26, 1916 in Elizabeth, Colorado, Myra Ellen received a B.A. in 1937 and a M.A. in 1938 from the University of Colorado, Boulder. Upon graduation in 1938, she taught for twelve years in Colorado's public schools. Earning a Ph.D. in 1953 from the University of New Mexico, Myra Ellen worked as a free-lance research historian and completed a short stint as the archivist for the Museum of New Mexico. When the New Mexico State Records Center and Archives was created in 1960, she was employed as senior archivist and served as State Historian from 1969 until her retirement in 1980.

Myra Ellen, an authority on numerous topics relating to New Mexico's past, specialized in land grants, water rights, and Pueblo Indian research. Some of her published works include: "The Baltasar Baca 'Grant': History of An Encroachment," *El Palacio* (1961); "Taos Pueblo and Its Neighbors, 1540-1847" (1966), and "Spanish Land Grants in the Tewa Area" (1972), both in the *New Mexico Historical Review*; "Oñate's Administration and the Pueblo Indians," in *When Cultures Meet: Remembering San Gabriel Del Yungue Oweenge*, Sunstone Press, 1987; and *A Brief History of New Mexico*, coauthored with Albert H. Schroeder and published by University of New Mexico Press in 1974. In addition, Myra Ellen created calendars and guides for the *Spanish Archives of New Mexico*, the *Mexican Archives of New Mexico*, and the *Territorial Archives of New Mexico*. From 1960 until her death, Myra Ellen has been thanked in the preface of nearly every book published on New Mexico history. Innumerable theses and dissertations also

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carry such acknowledgments of appreciation. Scholars and researchers looked to her for valuable assistance before publishing their work.

An authority and expert witness on Pueblo Indian issues since 1950, Myra Ellen assisted many pueblos in trying to either retain or regain title to their ancestral lands. Among these were Laguna, Acoma, Sandia, and Zuni pueblos. She was instrumental in helping the Pueblo of Taos regain title to Blue Lake. Myra Ellen was often called to give expert testimony on land grants and water rights.

Myra Ellen is also remembered as a speaker and lecturer on New Mexico and Southwest history. She welcomed these opportunities, and taught history courses at several colleges including the College of Santa Fe, New Mexico State University, and the University of New Mexico.

A devoted member of many boards and societies, Myra Ellen worked for the preservation of New Mexico history. A partial list of her board appointments includes: the *New Mexico Historical Review*, the Historical Society of New Mexico, the Museum of New Mexico (including Friends of the Palace), Las Golondrinas Foundation, the Historic Santa Fe Foundation, the State Cultural Properties Review Committee, and the Commission of Public Records.

Myra Ellen's efforts to preserve New Mexico's historic patrimony were rewarded with a considerable list of honors. A few of her awards are: the National Trust Award for Historic Preservation, presented by Lady Bird Johnson in 1974; the Board of Directors' Award, presented by the Historical Society of New Mexico in 1986; and induction into the New Mexico Women's Hall of Fame in 1987, by Governor Garrey Carruthers.

A large void was created with death of Myra Ellen Jenkins. She leaves many friends, associates, and students who mourn her passing. Her funeral was attended by Governor and Mrs. King, U.S. Senator Jeff Bingaman, and directors of museums, archives, and libraries from across the Southwest. Authors, researchers, and publishers attended, as did numerous friends and family. All of them attest to her influence and impact on the study of New Mexican history.