

NEWSLETTER

March 2024

Doña Ana County Historical Society

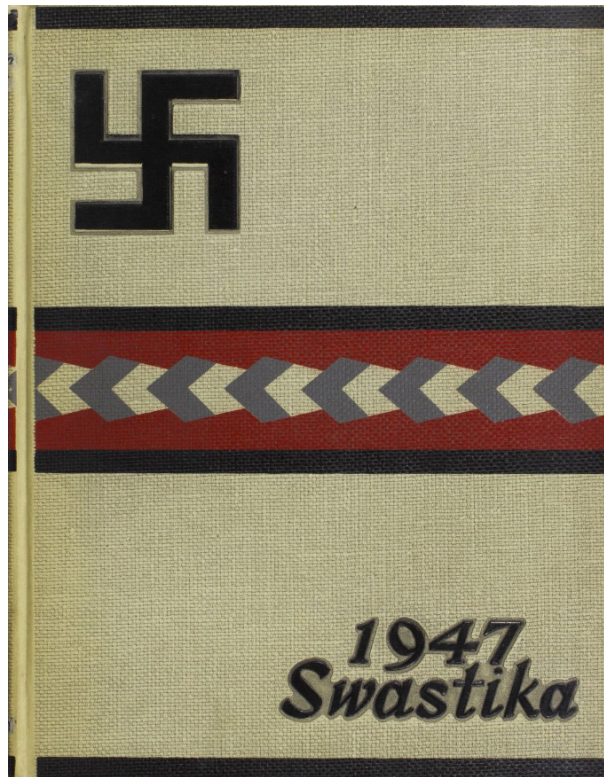
Richard Melzer, Renowned New Mexico Historian, To Speak About The Swastika's History At NMSU

One of the best known historians in New Mexico will speak on **March 21 at 7 p.m.** at the DACHS monthly public meeting at the Good Samaritan auditorium. He will be talking about the long history of the Swastika as a symbol and its use around New Mexico State University with emphasis on the school's yearbook which was called "The Swastika."

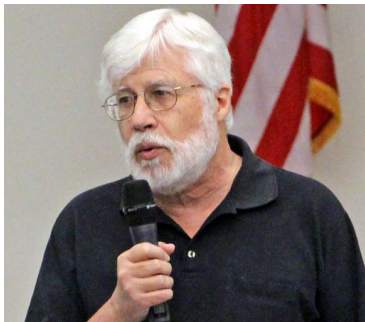
The New Mexico College of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts, better known as New Mexico A&M, published its first student yearbook in 1907. A contest was held among students to name the yearbook, and the name Swastika was selected, in part because the swastika is an ancient symbol of fortune and good luck used by Native Americans in the Southwest. As the years passed, and the symbol was adopted by the Nazi Party in Germany, the meaning behind the symbol changed. Attempting to maintain a long tradition, New Mexico A&M, and later New Mexico State University, held

on to the name Swastika until 1983, when it was renamed The Phoenix, again through a student contest.

Dr. Richard Melzer, retired Professor of History, University of New Mexico-Valencia Campus, has published and lectured on a wide variety of topics in twentieth century New Mexico history. His most recent books include *Breakdown: How the Secret of the Atomic Bomb Was Stolen during World War II* (Sunstone Press, 2000), *Coming of Age in the Great Depression: The Civilian Conservation Corps Experience in New Mexico, 1933-42* (Yucca Tree Press, 2000), and *Buried Treasures: Famous and Unusual*



Gravesites in New Mexico History (Sunstone Press, 2007). He also has published articles in *New Mexico Magazine*, *New Mexico Historical Society*, *Western Historical Quarterly*, *El Palacio*, *Journal of the West*, and *Military History of the Southwest*. He has been University of New Mexico's outstanding "Teacher of the Year" and is a past president of the Historical Society of New Mexico.



The auditorium is at 3011 Buena Vida Cr.,. If we get permission to Zoom the presentation, we will send out the invitation along with the meeting reminder a few days before.

New Website Just Published On Black Miner David L. Jackson

EDITOR'S NOTE: On Feb. 21 the historical society received the following email. It is complimentary of DACHS and provides some interesting reading if you are interested in area Black History or the mining community of White Oaks.

Hello Doña Ana County Historical Society,

Recently I finally got around to publishing a website I made (using ArcGIS StoryMaps) about a Black miner named David L Jackson who lived in White Oaks, NM. I wanted to let you know about my page since I reference your site on it.

I was really lucky to find your page, I learned a lot about New Mexican history. I have read every back issue and just finished your 2024 publication!

Anyways, I just wanted to thank you for your hard work and say that without your page I wouldn't have found out about Jack or Roberta Haldane's research. And I wanted to share Jack's story with you all, and maybe if you think it's interesting or a fellow historian might then please pass it along. I'm also looking for feedback on how to improve my page or your references, so please let me know what you think. Thanks again for all that you all do!

David Jacobs

The URL for the website is: <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/4e55dcd127b146898ff08187b5a6f3c5>

Fort Selden Offers Special Tour On Saturday, March 2 Learn How To Build A Campfire And Cook Something

What: Fort Selden Sunrise Over the Ruins: Nature Hike and Build a Campfire. Watch the sunrise over the fort's historic ruins and the Robledo Mountains. Enjoy birding, photography, painting, wildlife viewing, and the cool, fresh morning air. Staff will provide a guided tour of the Fort Selden ruins beginning at 9:00 a.m. and explain how to build a campfire to highlight how and why we cook outside to feature the history of campfire cooking and other activities at Fort Selden that soldiers participated in during the Fort's use between 1865-1891.

When: Saturday, March 2, Site opens at 6:00 a.m., Ranger-guided tour, 9:00-10:00 a.m., How to Build a Campfire Kitchen, 10:00-11:00 a.m.

Where: Fort Selden Historic Site, 1280 Fort Selden Road, Radium Springs, NM 88054. Take NM I-25, Exit 19, Radium Springs.

Why: Sunrise over Fort Selden's adobe ruins offers visitors a beautiful glimpse of the Site in the morning light. General admission of \$5 for adults, children 16 years and younger are free. Call 575-526-8911 for more information.

Branigan Library Offers Author's Talk on Wednesday, March 6

Branigan Library offers a series of talks given by authors. The March "Author Talk" will be given by bilingual writer / journalist Zita Arocha. She'll read from her new memoir about her hyphenated identity as a Cuban American, her family's exile from Cuba in the 1950's, her misadventures as a journalist writing about Cuba, and the fractious relationship between her native and adoptive countries.

The talk is free and open to the public. It will be March 6, Wednesday, 1:30-3:00 p.m. in the Roadrunner Room at Branigan Library. For more information, you can contact Susan Ansara at ansara@me.com or by phone at: 575-649-8786.

BTW, welcome to Susan who just joined the Doña Ana County Historical Society.

Southern New Mexico Historical Review Has Been Mailed Out

Copies of the *Southern New Mexico Historical Review* have been passed out and mailed out to those who have paid their dues for 2024 or who are lifetime members. At the awards banquet Karla Kay Steen took the bull by the horns, as she is want to do, and went ahead and paid her dues for a "lifetime" membership so she could pick up her copy

and not have to worry about ever renewing again. Thanks Karla.

If you are paid up and have not received your copy, please contact Jim Eckles at nebraska1950@comcast.net. We'll make sure you get your copy as a printed copy is one of the perks of membership in the historical society.

What The Heck Is The DACHS Old Timer Award?

EDITOR'S NOTE: *It sounds like an award for a person but its not. In January we gave the award to the petroglyphs on Tonuco Mtn. Below is Madeline Vessel's history of it with the first awardees.*

The Old Timer Award was first presented at the eighth Annual Banquet on January 24, 1974, and has been given sporadically since. The award was conceived by Opal Lee Priestley to identify a cherished object, a natural phenomenon, or a cultural tradition which deserves public attention and which would otherwise escape recognition as an important part of the physical character of the Mesilla Valley.

An interesting twist was added in 1976 when the Old Timer Award temporarily became the Old Chimer Award and again in 1991 when it became the Doña Ana County Treasures Award.

1974 - Garcia Trees, pecan trees, "distinguished pioneers of the Mesilla Valley"

1975 - Depot Lane Mulberries

1976 - The bells of San Albino, the bells of St. Genevieve, the Hendricks Mission bells, and the Doña Ana Mission bell

1977 - Harvey Gin's Cotton Wagon #1. At the time this award was given, the wagon was on the Harvey Gin lot on Compress Road being used to haul cotton. The first known owner of the wagon was Jack Bower who probably owned the wagon in the 1920s. (I think this is in reference to the wagon DACHS used to own and recently donated to the State Historic Sites)

1980 - LeRoy and Ruth Carver's fall custom of preparing a Harvest Home arrangement of grain and fruits and vegetables at their farm home on Avenida de Mesilla

1983 - The Story Tree, NMSU Campus

1986 - The Rio Grande, Mesilla Valley's greatest natural phenomenon

1987 - The Pieta located at the corner of South Main and Lohman. It was dedicated in 1941 to "Our Sorrowful Mother" to commemorate the founding of the Order of Loretto in Kentucky in 1812. Ten feet and one inch high and weighing 690 pounds, the statue is made of Orobronze by the Duprato Statuary Studio of Chicago. "It represents Mary, the Mother of our Blessed Lord, holding her Dying Son in her arms after He was taken down from the cross."

1988-Butterfield Trail. "Originally called Cooke's Wagon Road, it was contracted by the U. S. Government to John Butterfield in 1858 to establish what became known as the Butterfield Overland Mail service. Locally, there was a Butterfield station at Picacho, Mesilla, and Fort Fillmore. The Butterfield Trail route through Doña Ana County was abandoned in 1861."

1989 - Dripping Springs. Dripping Springs is located in a green canyon near a water fall in the Organ Mountains seventeen miles from Las Cruces. From 1872 to 1915, it was the site of a summer resort and health camp operated by Major Eugene Van Patten. Later it was owned by Dr. Nathan Boyd, Dr. and Mrs. T. C. Sexton, the A. B. Cox family, and the Nature Conservancy. At the time the award was given, Dripping Springs belonged to the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). On account of its acquisition by the BLM, Opal Lee Priestley was moved to write: "Ten rare plants grow on the land in the shadow of the towering Organs. Four of them are found no place else in the world. Now the Organ Mountain Pincushion Cactus, the Nodding Cliff Daisy, the Evening Primrose and the Figwort will be safe for future generations. And so will the cool green beauty of Dripping Springs."

1991 - Luminarias of La Mesilla and Las Cruces Acquia Madre were honored with the special Doña Ana County Treasure Award. The tradition of placing luminarias on the plaza in Mesilla on Christmas Eve began with Josephine Gamboa Emerson. Originally, she put luminarias only around her house. Gradually, over the years, she expanded the number of luminarias she put out to five hundred lining the sidewalks of the plaza. In 1983, when she felt she could no longer carry out the work, she challenged the Lions Club of Mesilla to help her. At the time the award was given, Los Leones were providing the labor and material, residents of the village were lighting the candles, and the fire department was collecting the refuse afterward.

1992 - New Mexico's "El Camino Real" was recognized as a Doña Ana County Treasure.

1993 - The Millstone known as El Molino ground the first wheat in Las Cruces. It was built by Salvador Cordova in 1849.

The Back Page -----

1. Note the story about the Old Timer Award on page 3. The board would like to ask for some help in identifying possible people, places, cultural items and structures to recognize in January 2025. The list of awards and their criteria are listed on the DACHS website. If you can think of something appropriate for one of the awards, ***please send your suggestions*** to AWARDS at 19dachs63@gmail.com.

2. We have just finished publishing the 2024 issue of the *Southern New Mexico Historical Review* and it is time to start thinking about the 2025 issue. The society accepts articles for the *Review* from both amateur and professional historians. Articles should cover historical events and people from Southern New Mexico or Northern Mexico. But we also accept essays and book reviews. The deadline for your piece would mid-October. ***Please consider writing up that great little story you know about your family or some event in our area.*** Contact Jim Eckles at 19dachs63@gmail.com for answers and guidance.

3. Rick Adkisson, Professor Emeritus, Dept. of Economics, Applied Statistics and International Business at NMSU, has written an article about ***Black homesteading near Las Cruces*** which will be published later this year in *Great Plains Quarterly*. He has offered to allow members to preview the article now. If you would like to read it, contact Jim Eckles at 19dachs63@gmail.com for a PDF copy. Rick only asks that you not give it to anyone else until after publication.

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