



NEWSLETTER

November 2019

Doña Ana County Historical Society

Frequent DACHS Contributor Judy Messal To Give Presentation On Dorothy Mechem

The Gomoets Prize winner for best article in the *Southern New Mexico Historical Review*, Judy Messal, will be our program presenter on Nov. 21 at 7 p.m. Her talk is titled, “Dorothy Mechem, First Lady in Mid-century New Mexico: From Evening Gowns to Fishing Poles.”

Dorothy Heller Mechem was striking and stylish, astute and witty. Her life was one of adventure, romance, and tragic loss. Born in 1911, she grew up on a ranch near Pueblo, Colorado. In the early years of the Great Depression, she attended Colorado Women’s College in Denver where she met Jean Sexton. Visiting Jean’s hometown of Las Cruces one summer, Dorothy Ellen Heller met Edwin L. Mechem. It was an immediate, romantic, and enduring connection. His political career brought her challenges which she met with grace and hard work. No first lady spent as much time raising young children in

the public eye of the state capital as Dorothy Mechem did--eight years. She lived in three governor’s mansions, beginning with the one in downtown Santa Fe. A grand structure with classical touches, it was literally falling apart and had feral cats in the basement when she and her family moved in. Dorothy Mechem was one of the busiest first ladies of those times with regard to official entertaining--all accomplished with virtually no staff, a delightful sense of humor, four kids to look after, and retreats along the rivers and streams of northern NM



where she became passionate about fishing. She always looked forward to returning home to Las Cruces where in 1963 helped found the Dona Ana County Historical Society.

The meeting will be at the Good Samaritan auditorium. The hall is at 3011 Buena Vida Circle. The lecture is free and open to the public.

Eckles To Speak At Farm & Ranch Exhibit Opening

DACHS member Jim Eckles will give a talk during the opening of the latest New Mexico Farm and Ranch Museum exhibit. Called “Home on the Range: From Ranches to Rockets,” the exhibit will open to the public at a reception on Nov. 7, from 5 to 7 p.m. Eckles is scheduled to speak at 6. All are invited.

first, it was just the ranching story, but we then decided to get into the military and science part of it. There’s a whole section about the science and research that goes on out there.”

Another DACHS member, Leah Tookey, is the curator of the new exhibit. She said, “At

Eckles, who spent 30 years at White Sands escorting ranchers to their former homes and writing about the technological advances tested there, will pay tribute to both the ranchers and missileers who have used that landscape.

Annual Awards Event In January Will Be Different

In an attempt to provide a little variety in the things we do, the board of directors has approved a proposal to change the annual awards banquet to an awards party. It will be held on January 25 at the New Mexico Farm and Ranch Museum and will happen during a two-hour window in the middle of the afternoon.

Instead of a sit-down dinner or lunch, we will nosh our way through heavy hors d'oeuvres during the first hour. This will allow us to mingle and talk to each other as we eat. We are assured by the caterer

that there will plenty of food and you will be able to make a meal from the offerings.

During the second hour, we will sit for the presentation of awards and a guest speaker.

One advantage to this date at Farm and Ranch is that we will piggyback on the museum's Antique Treasures Show, where antique experts will be on hand with a variety of items for sale. Also, they will offer evaluations of objects brought in by the public.

More details will follow in the December newsletter. Mark it on your calendar.

Positive News Concerning The Old Country Club Clubhouse

For those of you who do not receive DACHS news via email, the board of directors recently sent an open letter to Las Cruces city officials concerning news that the old country club's new developer plans to bulldoze the Trost and Trost designed clubhouse. It was built in 1929 and is a fine example of their architectural style.

We have been joined by several other organiza-

tions to fight to keep the building. Las Cruces mayor Ken Miyagishima jumped on board and got the ball rolling by calling the developer. Using talking points from the various concerned organizations, the mayor convinced the owners to take a second look. He has put together a committee of local experts and advocates to meet with the developer soon to point out how positive restoration would be for investors.

DACHS Members Visit Ghost Town Of Chloride

There were 16 of us who traveled to the almost ghost town of Chloride on Oct. 19th. Apparently there are 13 people living there now. Don Edmund and his daughter Linda (white tshirt in photo below) gave the group a briefing and walk down main street to give us a look into the past of an old silver mining town. Don and his daughter have fixed up two old

miner's cabins that are now available to rent.

The small community is trying to attract more tourists and has a museum, seen below with Chuck Murrell looking at a plethora of old stuff, a gift shop and a nice cafe. The group ate in the cafe and reported that the food was very good - there was home-baked cake for dessert.



DACHS Elections Will Be Held At The Nov. Meeting

It Is Time To Renew Your DACHS Membership

If you have not renewed your membership in the Dona Ana County Historical Society for 2020, please consider doing so now. Just fill out the form below and mail it to our address or bring it with you

to the November program at Good Sam on Nov. 21 and give it to Dennis Fuller or Susan Krueger. You can make your check out to: DACHS. Also note the slight increase in cost.

Doña Ana County Historical Society, P. O. Box 16045, Las Cruces, NM 88004-6045

DACHS Membership Form

Please renew/enroll my/our membership in the Doña Ana County Historical Society. Memberships are active for the calendar year of enrollment and fees are deductible within legal limits for Federal and State income tax purposes. If you are unsure of your status or have questions regarding membership, please contact Susan Krueger, at 575 525-0654.

Annual Membership/Sponsorship Rates

Individual \$25 Family \$30 Student \$10 Contributor \$40
Benefactor \$150 Life \$300

Southern New Mexico Historical Review Sponsorship + \$50

Is this a change of information? Yes No A check for \$ _____ is enclosed.
Date _____ Check # _____

Name(s) _____

Address _____

Email Address _____

Phone # _____

You will automatically receive the Monthly Newsletter in your email as a PDF. Would you also like a paper, printed copy mailed later to the above postal address? Yes No

Your membership includes a copy of the annual *Southern New Mexico Historical Review*(SNMHR). Are you willing to download the version on the DACHS website or would you like to receive a printed copy?

Printed copies are usually first available at the annual Awards Luncheon.

Membership Notes

✦ The November meeting of the Dona Ana County Genealogical Society will be on the 13th at 2 p.m. at the Thomas Branigan Memorial Library in the 2nd floor Roadrunner Room. Visitors welcome.

The program this month is “Look What I Found In Grandpa’s Barn.” This is a variation on the more traditional but ever popular program about finding things in Grandma’s attic. If you have an object that might be found in a barn and want to share it with the members and guests contact Frankie Lerner at palomascreek@gmail.com to be included in the program. Cows, horses, goats, pigs and chickens are not welcome.

✦ David Thomas will be at Coas Bookstore downtown on Nov. 16 signing copies of his latest book: *Killing Pat Garrett, The Wild West’s Most Famous Lawman - Murder or Self-Defense?*

✦ Anyone ready for an out-of-state field trip? Jim and Debbie Eckles just returned from Fort Bowie National Historic Site in SE Arizona. There is a lot of history there and some of it is local. On the 1.5 mile trail to get to the fort’s ruins, they discovered a sign dedicated to our own Sgt. Albert Fountain who, while in the California Column, led a charge against Cochise’s warriors to gain access to Apache Spring. This was in 1862. The soldiers took refuge at the abandoned Butterfield stage stop that is in the valley.

Fort Bowie was thrown up there to be the hub for Army actions against the last Native Americans not confined to reservations.

The walk is scenic, pretty easy and loaded with history. Fort Bowie is administered by the National Park Service.

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