



NEWSLETTER

Special Summer Issue #2, 2020

Doña Ana County Historical Society

An Update About This Fall From Our President

By Dennis Daily
President, DACHS

Perhaps it would be an understatement to say that the past several months have been interesting. Many have called the spring of 2020 “historic,” “unprecedented,” and “once in a lifetime,” but time and future generations will hold the final judgment on that. I think we can agree that our Pandemic 2020 has been unusual and disruptive in ways we could not have imagined. I am eager to see some return to life as it was before the third decade of the 21st century came and pulled the collective rug out from under us all.

For DACHS, the crisis resulted in the cancellation of our spring lecture series but up to now has not had a major impact on our organization. The Board has been meeting online and has been able to conduct its business without much problem.

With the situation still precarious, particularly in terms of virus spread and group gatherings, plans for the remainder of this year are beginning to take shape. It’s not looking good. There is some measure of restlessness across the country, and right here in our community, that we get this whole episode behind us and return to “normal,” but there seem to be some potential high-level risks on that path.

What are some possible scenarios for DACHS in the near term?

Our fall speaker series typically begins in September. At this point, we are not expecting that we will be able to hold these meetings. State and federal guidelines, the rules of the our meeting venue – the Good Sam Las Cruces Village – and common sense all dictate that large gatherings are to be avoided. Attendees at our meetings, in the vast majority, fall into the most at-risk category for COVID-19.

It would be irresponsible for us needlessly to endanger our members in this manner. So what options do we have for DACHS during the fall of 2020?

I think we have two options for the lecture series. We could simply put it on hold until the situation improves. This, unfortunately, does not create an ideal situation for keeping our membership involved. We want DACHS to continue to be a vital and rewarding organization for its members.

Alternatively, we could consider a “virtual” lecture series using an online meeting platform. I have attended many of these in the past few months (as I imagine many of you have) and feel it can be a fairly effective substitute under the circumstances. This easily could be accomplished and might be an interesting experiment. Look for an announcement soon regarding a trial-run with an online presentation by our own Jim Eckles on the 75th anniversary of the Trinity Site test. He was scheduled to give the presentation this spring, before the anniversary, but it is still timely.

We also will be considering options for our 2021 banquet. It seems a long way off, and we sincerely hope we are in a completely different situation by then, but we do need to keep the topic on the table. **Do you have an opinion about these scenarios?** Or do you have other ideas for ways we can collectively engage with our region’s unique history during this time of social distancing? The Board would love to hear from you to help inform our decisions. **Please send comments to our society email address: 19dachs63@gmail.com or our editor at nebraska1950@comcast.net.**

On behalf of the Board, I send best wishes to everyone, hoping that you are healthy and safe.

Law Enforcement Museum Returns Wagon & Buggy

By Dennis Daily
President, DACHS

In late June, I received a phone call from Dona Ana County Sheriff Kim Stewart. No, I wasn't in trouble with the law, instead Sheriff Stewart let me know about some old sheriff's department ledger books for which she was trying to find a home. She thought the NMSU Archives might be interested in the books.

I made arrangements to go visit the department's office on Motel Boulevard and was thrilled to find more than 40 large ledger books, dating from about 1910 through the 1980s, filled with early jail records, fee and docket books, mug shot books, and other information about the history of crime in Dona Ana County. After assuring Sheriff Stewart that we were indeed interested in accepting the books, she took me into the little museum located in the department.

Some of you might be aware that for many years now, the Dona Ana County Sheriff's Department has been home to the Historical Museum of Lawmen, featuring artifacts from more than 100 years of law enforcement in Dona Ana County. The museum has featured a permanent exhibit of uniforms, badges, hats, firearms, photographs, documents, and other law enforcement artifacts.

The showcase of the museum, however, is the hearse that was used to carry our most-famous sheriff, Pat Garrett, to his final resting place. As Stewart showed me these materials, she said that the department would be closing the museum. The depart-



Jesus Lopez tightens the tie-down straps during the removal of the doctor's buggy from the Law Enforcement Museum. Photo by Bob Gamboa

ment needs the space for its primary directive of law enforcement, and does not have the personnel to adequately staff the museum or care for the artifacts. In short, Stewart said, the sheriff's department is a law enforcement agency and needs to get out of the museum business.

I certainly saw her point of view. Her dilemma was what to do with all the items in the museum. She said she had been in contact with some folks from the New Mexico Farm and Ranch Heritage Museum and that they had expressed some interest in taking the hearse. It fell to Jim Beasley, a life-long resident of Dona Ana County, retired sheriff's department deputy and now the museum's coordinator, to arrange the disposition of all the museum's



artifacts. Beasley is knowledgeable and enthusiastic about our region's history.

Our own Bob Gam-

boa, a passionate advocate for all things Pat Garrett, made sure the DACHS board was in the loop on the dissolution of the museum. Bob also let me know that Beasley would be contacting me about two vehicles that would be returned to DACHS - a rustic, single-seat, soft-top buggy, and an equally rustic, if slightly less elegant, farm wagon.

On July 23, a small group of DACHS members met at the Sheriff's Department to load up the vehicles and haul them away. It turns out that DACHS donated the vehicles to the museum in 1995, but a clause in the contract read that if they should ever dispose of them, they would contact us.

Our consciences for preserving history prevailed over our better judgement and we hauled the two vehicles to Susan Kreuger's home until we determine what to do with them. Since the society has no property to store or display the vehicles, our goal is to find them an appropriate, appreciative, and permanent home. Exactly how we will do that has been discussed but we've yet to settle on a final plan.

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Silver City Student's Documentary Featured In Washington

The New Mexico National History Day program recently announced that Rechelle Gutierrez, a junior at Silver High School, had her documentary submission "The Spark of the Civil Rights Movement: Diane Nash" selected for the 2020 Digital Documentary Showcase hosted by the National Museum of African American History and Culture in Washington, D.C. The event ran from June 17 – 24, and was shown online via the Smithsonian Learning Lab. Gutierrez's video documentary from the state contest can be viewed on the New Mexico Humanities Council website at: <https://nmhum.org/NMHC.php?c=1546>

Gutierrez was a student participant in the New Mexico History Day program and recently competed in the state competition in April 2020, where she took first place in the Senior Individual Documentary category. This is not the first time she has earned recognition for her scholarly achievement; Gutierrez was also a national finalist for her documentary

covering Robert F. Kennedy at the 2019 National History Day (NHD) competition.

The New Mexico History Day program is hosted by the New Mexico Humanities Council, and the recent state competition was held virtually with students and schools from across the state. The theme for the 2021 History Day competition will be "Communication in History: The Key To Understanding."

Review Articles Being Sought

There is still time to get a short article researched and written for the 2021 issue of the *Southern New Mexico Historical Review*. Finished pieces will be due in October.

Biography, local and family histories, oral history, student papers and articles focusing on the history of the Southwest and Northern Mexico will be considered.

For more information, contact Jim Eckles at nebraska1950@comcast.net.

Vehicles History

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MEMBERS - do you have any suggestions about what should be done with these vehicles?

Jim Eckles did a little sleuthing and found that the wagon was donated to the society in 1968 by Mary Kate Barker, widow of third-generation Mesilla Park farmer Arthur F. Barker (his grandfather F.C. Parker started the farm in 1889). It was then restored under the direction of Ira D. Steele. Part of the work was to fabricate new parts for the wagon's sides.

The buggy, described as a doctor's buggy, was donated to the society by Elizabeth Gillette, probably in the mid 1970s. The buggy came from Mexico and was supposedly used by a Mormon community, according to DACHS records. If you know more about these vehicles, please let us know.



Dennis Daily, Susan Krueger and Bob Gamboa, the DACHS board members who arranged for the return of the vehicles, pose in front of the wagon. Photo by Jim Eckles

“They Say There Is Gold In Them Thar Hills”



I took this photo of Ova Noss in early 1979 when I escorted her and Keith Kolb from KENW-TV of Eastern New Mexico University to Victorio Peak. The small mound is located in the San Andres Mountains along the western border of White Sands Missile Range. It is where Ova’s husband at the time, “Doc” Milton Noss, supposedly found about 100 tons of gold bars hidden in a cavern in the peak - most say it was November 1937.

Ova, along with her daughter Dorothy Delonas and Dorothy’s son Terry, and Les Smith, a mining engineer involved in many quests for treasure there, was granted permission to be there so she could be photographed and filmed for a book and movie about the whole affair.

Milton Noss called himself a doctor but he had no medical degree. Recent research shows he completed the Dr. Sholl’s “practipedic” course dealing with foot care and related products. He granted the title to himself. The course was something a person could do at home. The course material is actually quite interesting but it only requires a few days to a few weeks to complete. The book is still available online in PDF format.

Bill Bates, one of the White Sands range riders helped me that day. At one point he smiled and pointed to his gold tooth. He claimed he had more gold in his mouth than was ever found in Victorio Peak.

Jim Eckles

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www.donaanacountyhistoc.org

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

