



# NEWSLETTER

April 2023

Doña Ana County Historical Society

## Amador Hotel Update From Dr. Deb Dennis On 20th

Dr. Deborah Dennis, Vice President of the Amador Hotel Foundation, will speak April 20 at the Doña Ana County Historical Society's 7 p.m. program about the preservation and ongoing restoration of the historic Amador Hotel. The Amador is the only two-story adobe hotel in existence and has been recognized by the New Mexico Historic Preservation Division as one of the finest cultural gems in the state. The Amador family owned and operated the hotel serving weary travelers and hosting community events from 1885 until 1969 when the impact of Urban Renewal closed its doors.

Although the hotel has since been Citizens Bank and the County Manager's Complex, it has spent far too long waiting to be restored to its territorial glory as the cultural and historic icon it was for 85 years. Within the next five years, the Amador will be opened once again

as it becomes the gateway to a revitalized downtown and the hub of social life in the community as the city's Amador Event Center.

As usual the talk will be in the auditorium at Good Samaritan, 3011 Buena Vida Cir, and is open to the public. If we can arrange it, the talk will also be available on the web through Zoom. The Zoom invitation will be sent out a few days before in the reminder to members.

In addition to her work with the Amador Foundation, Dr. Dennis is the Executive Director of Human Systems Research, Inc. where she has served for 29 years since retiring from New Mexico State University. HSR is currently celebrating its 51st anniversary as the oldest private 501 (c)(3) nonprofit in southern New Mexico engaged in archaeological research, preservation, and public education.



*West elevation of the hotel showing the adobe structure under the stucco in October 1978.  
Photo by Jack Diven.*

# Happy 60th Anniversary To DACHS/1963-2023

It is a year for celebration as the Doña Ana County Historical Society marks its 60th year of existence. The board has been discussing ways to pass the year in style and has some possibilities. If you would like to suggest something, send it to Jim Eckles via email or corner a board members and tell them about it.

The board has talked about expanding visibility which might gain us new members. One way of doing that is establishing a table at the Farmer's Market on Saturday mornings. If we got enough volunteers, no one would have to do it more than once or twice.

Another suggestion was to have some sort of special event that would provide publicity and possibly raise money. The Human Systems Research buffalo roasts were an example of this..

The one suggestion that got a lot of attention is to sponsor a series of visits or field trips throughout the year. For instance, a trip to Fort Selden would be getting back the organization's roots since one reason DACHS was established was to preserve the fort.. Some other places suggested were:

1. J. Paul Taylor residence.
2. The new missile range museum and the LC-33 National Historic Landmark.
3. The Farm and Ranch Museum behind the scenes tour – this could be done in the summer while is hot outside.
4. The Garrett murder site out by Organ Mtn. School.

**SO, HOW DID DACHS START?** Here is what Madeleine Vessel wrote:

On the evening of Thursday, September 26, 1963, an informally organized group of local history buffs met with Victor Westphall, President of the Historical Society of New Mexico (HSNM), to establish a chapter of the state society in Dona Ana County. The meeting was held in the back patio of Betty Bowen's bookstore, the Design Center, which was located on the west side of Old Mesilla Plaza.

The organizers were amazingly diverse in their backgrounds, representing the university, the town, and the military. Chairman Louis E. Freudenthal was a longtime Las Cruces resident who had worked in farming, real estate, and insurance. George Adlai Feather was a Rhodes Scholar linguist who came to Las Cruces in 1923 to teach languages at New Mexico College of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts

and became an authority on the history of the Mesilla Valley. Martin Campbell, an Amador descendant, was the owner of the Amador Hotel. Helen Shomer and Dorothy Mechem were housewives. John L. Altshool, who was Freudenthal's son-in-law, was a stockbroker. Major Thomas Mitman was former military. Mark Thompson was a local businessman who owned H&K Trucking and Mayflower. Betty Bowen ran the Design Center and reviewed Southwest books on KRWG. Ira G. Clark was a history professor at New Mexico State University (NMSU). J. Paul Taylor was the Elementary Curriculum Coordinator in the Las Cruces School's Administrative Office. David Streeter was a reference librarian at NMSU, and Laiten L. Camien was a sociologist at NMSU.

Absent from this meeting, but part of the informal group, were General Hugh M. Milton II and Helen Caffey. Milton, a former academic and a retired army general, was Vice President of the First National Bank of Doña Ana County. And Caffey was Director of the Thomas Branigan Memorial Library.

## SEE, Immediate Goal - Ft. Selden, page 3

Minutes of Meeting, September 26, 1963

An informal meeting called together to form a Historical Society September 26, 1963, at the Design Center, Old Mesilla, New Mexico. Those present included: Mr. Victor Westphall, President of the Historical Society of New Mexico, Martin Campbell, Adlai Feather, Mrs. Sam Shomer, Mrs. Edwin Mechem, John Altshool, Thomas Mitman, Louis Freudenthal, Mark Thompson, Betty Bowen, Ira Clark, Paul Taylor, David Streeter, and Laiten Camien.

Mr. Westphall gave a brief run-down of the Statewide Projects of the New Mexico Historical Society, which include (1) nomination and participation in the Hall of Fame, and (2) discovery of various archival materials.

A committee, composed of Mrs. Shomer, John Altshool, Adlai Feather, Dr. Clark, and Mark Thompson, was appointed to serve as nominating committee.

Another committee, composed of Mark Thompson, Ira Clark, John Altshool, Mrs. Shomer, and Adlai Feather, was formed to draw up Articles of Incorporation and By-Laws.

Nominating Committee: President, Louis Freudenthal  
Vice-Pres, Adlai Feather  
Rec. Sec'y, Paul Taylor  
Corr. Sec'y, Miss Helen Caffey  
Treas. Gen'l Milton  
1st. Alt. Betty Bowen  
2nd. Alt. David Streeter

*Approved:*

***The actual minutes for the first DACHS meeting. These come from the DACHS records housed at NMSU Library Archives and Special Collections.***



## Immediate Goal - Save Ft. Selden ——— CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

The group believed that being affiliated with HSNM would help achieve two primary goals: Their immediate goal was to save Fort Selden, nearby military post suffering from the effects of vandalism and decay; their long-term goal was to preserve the history and culture of Doña Ana County.

Westphall was pleased to encourage the group's goals. Organizing statewide chapters was one of the HSNM's most important objectives. Through statewide chapters, HSNM hoped to become more effective in recording, preserving, and encouraging appreciation of New Mexico's social and cultural heritage. Westphall began his remarks by describing HSNM's statewide projects, particularly the newly established Annual Hall of Fame Banquet and efforts to discover archival materials from around the state. Then he gave a detailed explanation of how a Doña Ana County Historical Society could be organized and affiliated with HSNM.

When Westphall concluded his presentation, Freudenthal appointed two committees to formally organize the Dona Ana County Historical Society: a committee to nominate a slate of officers and a committee to draw up articles of incorporation.

On October 3rd, articles of incorporation and the following slate of officers were accepted: President Louis E. Freudenthal, Vice President George Adlai Feather, Recording Secretary J. Paul Taylor, Corresponding Secretary Helen Caffey, and Treasurer General Hugh M. Milton II. Betty Bowen and David Streeter were named first and second alternates, respectively. In addition, Milton was appointed acting custodian of all material belonging to the newly formed DACHS. On October 22nd, Freudenthal and Westphall signed the official affiliation agreement between DACHS and HSNM, and on November 25th, the Society approved its first set of bylaws.

By the time the bylaws were accepted, DACHS was well established with a well defined purpose and thirty-one members. New additions were Jay Weir, Jennalee Clark, Sam Shomer, Mr.

And Mrs. W. E. Flint, Colonel Ralph Cruse, Jerome Hartger, John Hawley, George Helfrich, Mary La Barre Hignett, Mrs. Earl Jones, Chester Linscheid, Charlotte Priestley, Joe Priestley, Virginia Spruiell, and Richard White .



*J. Paul Taylor presiding over a DACHS meeting ca. 1966. Taylor was the third president of DACHS and then again in the later 70s as the eighth president. DACHS records at NMSU Library Archives and Special Collections*



*By July 4, 1973, the DACHS immediate goal of saving Fort Selden was realized and was taking the next step as ground was broken of the visitors' center at the old fort. From left, Maj. Gen. Arthur H. Sweeney, Jr., commander White Sands Missile Range, Gen. Hugh M. Milton, III, U.S. Army retired, Harry Bailey, Jr., site donor, Louise Garrett, president DACHS, Carlos R. Nagel, director Museum of New Mexico, and David King, New Mexico State Planning Officer. DACHS records at NMSU Library Archives and Special Collections*

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## ✓ Doña Ana County Genealogical Society:

During the April 12, Society Meeting, DACGS member Bruce Pearson will share information with members and guests about how information in wills and probates can significantly improve your genealogical research.

You can attend in person at Branigan Memorial Library or via our Zoom broadcast on the 12th beginning at 2 pm MDT.

Society members will receive a reminder of the April meeting via email and non-members are welcome to participate in person or by Zoom session.

For non-member Zoom access, please send an email request with your name, telephone number, and email address to [dacgslc@gmail.com](mailto:dacgslc@gmail.com) at least two days before the meeting date.

✓ **Farm and Ranch Heritage Museum:** The delicate beauty of hummingbirds, their incredible movement, and the critical work they do as pollina-

tors are all captured in a new photography exhibit at the New Mexico Farm & Ranch Heritage Museum in Las Cruces. "Grace in Motion" features photography by Nirmal Khandan. The exhibit features 36 portraits of hummingbird species common to the region interacting with local flora.

The photography show opens with a reception from 1:30-3:30 p.m. on April 15. Admission to the opening reception is free. Regular Museum admission is required to see the rest of the Museum. The show will be on display through July 30, 2023.

The photos will hang in the Arts Corridor at the museum at 4100 Dripping Springs Road in Las Cruces.

The show features the work of nature and wildlife photographer Nirmal Khandan. A civil engineering professor and Ed & Harold Foreman Endowed Chair at New Mexico State University, Khandan began photographing birds in his native Sri Lanka and continued his hobby after moving to Las Cruces in 1998.

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