



NEWSLETTER

October 2014

NOTES FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

Susan Krueger

The DACHS Board met on Friday, September 12. The topic that dominated our discussion was the surprise finding that the Society's website had shut down during the summer. So what happened? Doyle Piland, our Newsletter editor, had emailed the Board in June to say that he successfully scanned all 21 issues of the Southern New Mexico Historical Review and converted them to "searchable" pdf, making them all available on the Society's website at www.donaanacountyhistsoc.org. So the shut-down was the result of a lot of work on Doyle's part—our many thanks to you, Doyle—and a delightful surge in traffic. To keep the web site open, the Board took action at the meeting to approve a paid upgrade.

During the month of October, Board members will be talking with Society members about Board membership. It is part of our long term effort to recruit future Board members and a short term effort to identify particular candidates for the nominating committee slate to be presented to the Society in November. If you would like to know more about serving on the DAC Historical Society Board, please call me, Susan, 525-0654.

Two Calendar Reminders: November 20th, 7:00 p.m., will be the last DACHS meeting for 2014. Nathan Brown, the NMSU Digital Projects Librarian, will present on the controversy surrounding the name of NMSU's yearbook: *The Swastika and The Phoenix*. Also, set aside January 31, 2015, at noon, Double Eagle Restaurant on the Mesilla Plaza for the 48th Annual Awards Luncheon.

We're still looking for articles for the *Southern New Mexico Historical Review*. To submit an article or to ask questions, contact the editors by email at snmhistory@gmail.com or by phone at 915-539-3381

October 16, 2014 Meeting Program

Our meeting program will be a presentation by Mr. Eric Liefeld titled "Troost & Troost in the Mesilla Valley: Recent Discoveries"

The presentation will highlight on-going research on the renowned El Paso architectural firm of Troost & Troost, with a focus on newly-attributed buildings in the Mesilla Valley. Mesilla Valley Preservation, Inc. (MVP) has been active in researching both surviving and lost Troost & Troost architecture seeking proof of attribution. Many new structures have recently come to light. Unfortunately, while some communities have capitalized on their Troost & Troost architecture, many buildings by the firm in the Mesilla Valley have remained obscure or have been lost to demolition.

Troost & Troost background:

For the first third of the 20th century, the acclaimed El Paso architectural firm of Troost & Troost designed most of the important buildings in the southwest. Visionary designer Henry C. Troost was a contemporary of Frank Lloyd Wright, and both were influenced by Chicago architect Louis Sullivan—who is often referred to as the spiritual father of American architecture. Together with his brothers Gustavus and Adolphus, Henry led Troost & Troost to design an extensive and varied range of buildings across Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and other states. Henry Troost was at home in diverse architectural styles, and designed everything from brick and reinforced concrete skyscrapers and hotels, to comfortable homes, schools, and other private and municipal buildings. Troost & Troost single-handedly established the look of the New Mexico College of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts (now NMSU), the Texas College of Mines (now UTEP), and to this day much of their iconic architecture still defines the downtown El Paso skyline.

See Troost & Troost on Page 3

Mesilla Park

Historic Place Nomination Update

Introduction by Susan Krueger

The focus of the DACHS's 47th Annual Awards Program, held on January 25 of this year, was the Mesilla Park neighborhood project, an extensive effort to lay the foundation for a district nomination to the state and national registers of historic places. Work on the project is ongoing and Janet Clements, one of its champions, has prepared an Update which follows. It includes a paragraph on how to help, with Janet's contact information.

For those interested in a closer look at the Mesilla Park project, Janet is holding an informal overview meeting. It will not be a training, but rather an explanation of the process and specific tasks for nominating Mesilla Park as a historic district so that those who are curious can better assess if they would like to join the project. The meeting will be held on Sunday, October 5, at 4:30 p.m. in the Mesilla Park Heritage Condominium Clubhouse, 905 Conway Ave. If you need directions, please call Janet: 575 524-0500 or 575 640-2001. There are tasks for all, the novice and the expert. Here is an opportunity to make a contribution to history while working with some extraordinary people.

Details by Janet Clements

Recently, several people have asked about the status of the Mesilla Park Historic District project, and since they had to ask, that means we haven't done a very good job of keeping you informed. So, the following is an attempt to bring you up to date on the status of the project.

Where We Were

As you may recall, Dr. Jon Hunner, NMSU History Dept., taught a Historic Preservation class fall semester 2013 and had his students begin the process of taking architectural surveys of Mesilla Park properties according to New Mexico State Historic Preservation Division (HPD) requirements. I had compiled a list from Doña Ana County records of nearly 700 buildings (parcel #, year built, etc.) that were within the Mesilla Park boundaries as defined by the Doña Ana County Historical Society in their 1982 publication, "The Las Cruces Historic Buildings Survey." The list was used to assign students to certain properties to survey and research.

Several of you attended the December 13, 2013 meeting at the Papen Center (Old Mesilla Park School) where the students presented their findings.

Additionally, they made a presentation to the Doña Ana County Historical Society during their 47th Annual Awards Program at the Double Eagle Restaurant in Mesilla on January 25, 2014.

In order to continue the surveying effort, Dr. Hunner conducted a workshop for volunteers on survey techniques in February, after which volunteer teams surveyed properties in March and April.

In May, Dr. Hunner announced that he was taking a temporary assignment as Interim Director, NM History Museum at the Palace of the Governors in Santa Fe through the end of 2014. This is quite an honor, and we congratulate Dr. Hunner on being chosen for this important assignment.

Where We Are

Since that time, the historic district boundaries have been redefined to focus on the original Rio Grande Land Company Mesilla Park Townsite of 1887 and Bowman's Addition of 1894. Specifically, those boundaries are Oak Street (both sides) on the East, Bowman Street (both sides) on the West, University Avenue on the North, and Union Avenue on the South. Within these boundaries are approximately 190 commercial and residential buildings and the Laguna Lateral community acequia.

Dr. Hunner's students and the March-April volunteers completed about 70 surveys. Of the remaining approximate 120 buildings, a small group of four volunteers have completed about half since June. Those volunteers are:

- Luis Rios, Professor of Architecture; Drafting and Design Technologies; NMSU-DACCC.
- Addison Warner, former student in Dr. Hunner's class who has recently completed his master's degree at NMSU and is currently working on an archaeological dig in Lincoln County with Human Systems Research, Inc.
- Dave & Janet Clements, Mesilla Park residents.

You may have seen us on the streets of Mesilla Park with our clipboards and cameras as we attempt to describe and record the features of the remaining 60 buildings. As we survey, if we are fortunate enough to talk to a resident, we have found that these interviews yield the most thorough and rewarding information.

The Next Steps

After surveying, the next step is to search the online county records to find the names of previous property owners on recorded deeds. The online records only go back to 1979, and then we must delve into the original documents that are bound in books. After finding names of previous owners, we then "Google" the names and search online newspaper archives to discover if any of these persons have

made significant contributions to the community. It is through the interviews and research that the property becomes personalized and the nomination is enhanced and more robust.

As you can see, there is still a lot of work to be done, yet we hope to submit the nomination to HPD by the end of June 2015.

What you can do:

There are ways you can help meet this deadline. If you love Mesilla Park; if you love history; if you love architecture; if you love making historical connections (“aha!” moments); then there are many ways that you can put your passions to good use for Mesilla Park. We will train on all of the following tasks:

- We have only “working” photos at present, and will need to submit quality digital photographs with the nomination, so we’re looking for one or more people to take photos of all the buildings. The photographer(s) will need to organize the photos by street address and upload them into the project files.

- We are looking for “sleuths” to go to the Doña Ana County Clerk’s Office on Motel Boulevard to look for specific deeds that identify previous owners in the original books. These books are large and heavy, and sometimes located on the top shelf, so you will need good upper body strength to do this task (brain AND brawn).

- We need volunteers who have online access to the NMSU Library to search for articles about previous owners.

We also need information, especially about the Mesilla Park community acequias. Do you have

maps? Photos? Copies of easement contracts? Oral or written history? The nomination depends on gathering this information.

If you have any questions or comments about the status of the project, or if you wish to volunteer, please call or email me. I would love to hear from you.

Thank you for your continued support.

Janet Clements

575-524-0500 - home

575-640-2001 - cell

jkwcllements@gmail.com

Trost & Trost from Page 1

Bio: Eric Liefeld, President and Founder, Mesilla Valley Preservation, Inc.

Eric Liefeld is a native of Las Cruces, New Mexico with a Bachelor of Science from New Mexico State University (1985). Mr. Liefeld is President of KTLO, LLC, a small technical marketing consultancy, in operation since 1994. Eric currently serves as President of Mesilla Valley Preservation, Inc. a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization with a mission of preserving the architectural legacy of the Mesilla Valley and “Preserving the Future of Our Past”. He is actively preserving and renovating several historic buildings in the Town of Mesilla, and volunteers with several local preservation efforts. Eric has interests in traditional adobe construction techniques, modern preservation approaches, and the architectural history of the southwest.

-----Cut along dotted line-----

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 the Treasurer, Rebecca Slaughter at 575-523-1845 (during business hours) or the President, Susan Krueger at 575-525-0654.

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

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E-mail address _____ Newsletter via E-mail Yes No

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September Program presenter, Mary Kay Shannon whose presentation was a “book report” on “*Last Frontier West*, by George Lee McNew,” borrowed from George Helfrich. Mary Kay is seen here returning the book.

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