



# NEWSLETTER

## October 2023

Doña Ana County Historical Society

### Jim Eckles To Talk About Victorio Peak Gold

The American West is littered with lost gold mine and treasure stories. One of the most enduring is the Victorio Peak tale with its loot estimated at something like \$28 billion by current claimants. That works out to be about 450 tons of gold which is up considerably from the 100-ton estimate back in the 1970s.

For us, it is just up the road in the San Andres Mountains on White Sands Missile Range. In fact, Milton (Doc) Noss, the man who claimed to have found it, was shot and killed in Hatch because of the gold and is buried here in Las Cruces in the Masonic Cemetery. Maybe we'll see his grave when we do our cemetery walk in a month or so.

Our October speaker, Jim Eckles, will delve into the history of this tall tale which refuses to go away. As an example, Eckles says the Discovery Channel ran a six-part infomercial about the treasure earlier this year. He states there are some people who really are convinced that presidents Kennedy, Johnson and Nixon all made withdrawals from the peak and a plethora of military personnel live in mansions from their use of the peak.

In the past few years, Eckles has done a little digging into the background of Noss and found his trail in Oklahoma, Texas and much of New Mexico as Noss advertised his foot clinics. Turns out "Doc" Noss also did astrological readings for paying customers and sold patent medicines guaranteed to cure pretty much anything that might ail you. He even had a show out of Del Rio, Texas on one of those blaster radio stations with transmitters in Mexico, where he appeared as the "Great Kareem" - no relation to the basketball player.

The presentation will be October 19, at 7 p.m., in the Good Samaritan auditorium, 3011 Buena Vida Cr. It is free and open to the public.



**GIFTS of ASTROLOGY**  
**SEE DR. MILTON E. NOSS**  
 The mental marvel of our time in person.  
 Your perplexing questions answered **FREE** from the stage of this Theatre  
**Tuesday, January 30th**  
 See Toby Johnson, the world's greatest Comedian!  
 Tune in on station K.A.S.A., Elk City, and hear Dr. Noss answer questions over the radio. Twice daily —9 o'clock mornings and 6 o'clock evenings.  
 Remember 1 Night Only—Tuesday, Jan. 29th  
 Admission 10c and 35c

Ad from the Shamrock Texan in 1934. Shamrock is in the Texas panhandle.



Jim Eckles at the Schmidt/McDonald ranch house near Trinity Site.

## It Is Election Time For DACHS Board And Officers

Every October the DACHS board of directors seeks historical society members interested in stepping up and taking one of the officer positions or joining the board as an at-large member. It is that time again and some new blood is needed. In fact, several board members and officers have been on the job for years now, something that didn't happen in early decades of the DACHS.

During October, we will take nominations for our various open positions. Those nominees will be published in the November newsletter with the actual election taking place at our November program on the 16th. You have to be a member to vote. The new board will be installed in January 2024 at the annual awards banquet.

A normal term on the board or as an officer is two years. The terms are staggered so the whole kit and caboodle doesn't change every two years. For this election cycle we have **4 at-large** board openings and an opening for both **President** and **Historian**. By the way, there is also an opening for **Past President** if any of our former heads would like to join in.

If you would like to help out on the board or take over an officer position, please contact our current president Dennis Daily at [ddaily@nmsu.edu](mailto:ddaily@nmsu.edu) or 575-646-4756.

If you know someone who would be a good candidate, talk to them and get their consent to be nominated.

## Two More Field Trips Planned For DACHS 60th Anniversary

As the end of our 60th year rapidly approaches, the board is planning two more field trips for members. One is a walking tour of the Masonic Cemetery and the other is a behind-the-scenes tour of the Farm and Ranch Museum.

The Masonic Cemetery provides an unusual way of looking at the history of Las Cruces and the Mesilla Valley. So many of our history makers are buried there we thought it would be a haunting good way to look at our past. There are the obvious, well-known people like Pat Garrett, Albert Fountain, Gen. Hugh Milton, W.W. Cox, Doc Noss and John Branson whose name is on Dennis Daily's building at NMSU. There are also lesser known people but who

have good stories attached to them. In fact, there is supposed to be the ghost of a girl who is occasionally seen in the cemetery.

We won't be doing this a night - there will be quite a bit of walking. It is a big place. We'll let you know when and where it will start via email.

Like any museum, the Farm and Ranch can only display a small portion of what it has acquired. Our tour will take us into the collections so you can see some of the good "stuff" currently hidden away awaiting some future exhibit.

This tour should be in early November and we'll let you know how to register. We might be limited on how many people can attend.

## Annual New Mexico History Conference Scheduled For April

The Historical Society of New Mexico (HSNM) will hold its 2024 New Mexico History Conference in Albuquerque April 25-27. Conference sessions and events will take place at the Embassy Suites, 1000 Woodward Place NE. DACHS is an institutional member of HSNM.

HSNM is seeking proposals for presentations at the conference. Sessions are 90 minutes in length. Most sessions will consist of two or three individual presentations delivered orally, each approximately 20-25 minutes, allowing time for a moderator's introduction and questions from the audience.

Proposals on any aspect of New Mexico, Southwest, or Borderlands history and culture are welcome, but special consideration will be given to presentations and sessions focused on New Mexico.

Topics of particular interest include Native American and other ethnic groups, communities, mining, military, ranching, trails, women's history, border relations, architecture and preservation, cultural traditions, Route 66, and the lives of colorful and influential personalities.

The HSNM Program Committee will match proposals for single presentations with similar topics to constitute a full session. Proposals for topical sessions occupying a full 90-minute period are especially encouraged. All presenters must register as conference participants.

If you are interested in presenting at the conference, visit the conference webpage on the HSNM website - <https://hsnm.org/history-conference/>. Proposal submission deadline is October 31, 2023.



## Frank Brito Book On His Family History Has Been Published



**INDIANS, LATINOS, AND CONFEDERATES,  
A WESTERN FAMILY: 1598-1973**

**Frank J. Brito**

**Brand Book 26, Los Angeles Corral,  
Westerners International**

*Indians, Latinos, and Confederates, A Western Family: 1598-1973* (Los Angeles Corral Brand Book 26) by Frank J. Brito is now available. It is the story of a remarkable and unique Western American family with roots in the Mesilla Valley.

Within the old Spanish Colonial borderlands of New Mexico, Texas, Arizona, Chihuahua, Sonora and both Californias, Brito's diverse family incorporated Native Americans from three different Pueblo Tribes and Apaches as well as Irish, Polish, Dutch, Spanish and other Europeans. At a single time one of Brito's great-grandfathers was a bugler in the Mexican Army, while another great-grandfather was a bugler in the Confederate States Army. Brito antecedents were on a first-name basis with historical figures as different as Teddy Roosevelt, Pat Garrett, and Pancho Villa.

Frank lives in California and the book is available from the Westerners, Los Angeles Corral. The price is \$30 and includes tax and postage. Checks can be made out to: **Westerners, Los Angeles Corral**. Send in your order, with your return address clearly printed to: Brand Book 26, 16007 LeMarsh St., North Hills, CA 91343.

## In The Good Old Days You Could Mail Your Kid To Visit Family

As a subscriber to Newspapers.com, I receive periodic emails with little discoveries from the company's staff. At the end of September there was an interesting and surprising piece written by Jenny Ashcraft. Apparently the U.S. Post Office started parcel post in 1913 and immediately families started taking advantage of it by mailing their kids to other family members. I assume it was cheaper than buying them a train ticket.

To back the story up, Ashcraft dug out and posted several newspaper articles documenting the practice until it was outlawed in 1920. Most of the articles were light and treated the subject as unusual but fairly practical for many parents.

The first example was from the *Minden Courier* in Ohio, dated Jan. 30, 1913. The short piece went to some lengths to relate how the baby boy was within the weight and length restrictions and was "well wrapped." The article ended saying the postage was 15 cents and the package was insured for \$50. Quite a bargain.

At first, children were simply sent with a mail courier along the route to a relative close by. But

distances got longer and longer. In 1915, the *Sauk Centre Herald* reported on a family that shipped a boy, Freddie Colby, from Fargo, N.D. to his grandparents in Valley City, N.D., a distance of 60 miles. The reporter wrote that railroad officials are glad the parcel post restrictions would prevent shipping an adult.

Another story from 1915 was about six-year old Edna Neff who wore a placard with her name, destination and 50 cents in stamps. She was "shipped" from Pensacola, Fla. to Christiansburg, Va.

By 1919, families were getting bolder. In October, the *Albuquerque Morning Journal* reported that a six-year old girl was shipped from Los Angeles, Calif. to Phoenix, Ariz. The girl reportedly grumbled that she did not like all the ugly tags they affixed to her new dress. In this case, the girl travelled in a Pullman car taking up a seat from a regular paying customer. We don't know where Edna Neff spent her time on the train. The railroads were probably not happy and it didn't take long for the post office to stop it. Ashcraft says some people were unhappy and lobbied to be able to continue to mail their children.

# The Back Page -----

The Territory of New Mexico attended the 1904 World's Fair in St. Louis. *New Mexico Mines and Minerals: World's Fair Edition, 1904*, authored by Fayette Alexander Jones, was produced to promote mining in the territory. I found this in the book:

*"Some mining in a desultory manner, has no doubt been carried on in New Mexico, under Spanish rule, and a little, perhaps, done by the aborigines. Yet the evidence, aside from the turquoise mines at Los Cerrillos and the Burro mountains, is sufficient to satisfy the statement that no true metal mining was ever carried on within the borders of New Mexico until about the beginning of the year 1800; with the possible exception of Mina del Tierra in the vicinity of the turquoise near Los Cerrillos.*

*Governor Chacon in 1808, says: "Copper is abundant, and apparently rich, but no mines are worked."*

*Lieutenant Pike in 1807, speaks of only one mine in New Mexico; the inference being, no doubt, the*

*copper mine at Santa Rita.*

*Pino in 1812 mentioned that old silver mines had been found closed up with the tools inside; these workings were perhaps nothing more than prospects and had been done by the Spaniards prior to the Pueblo revolt in 1640. The evidence seems conclusive no mines of either silver or gold were worked to any extent prior to 1800; save some little gold picked from the gravels at various points throughout the Territory and from the silver lead mines in the vicinity of Los Cerrillos, so alluded to above.*

*Under Spanish rule prospecting for placer gold was carried on to a certain extent; yet no rich finds were ever brought to notice, excepting at the Old and New Placers.*

*There would be no good reason to claim that the Pueblo Indians or the early Spanish explorers were better qualified to find rich mines than the modern prospector of today.*

*The Spaniard has been a gold hunter from the earliest times and placer gold was the kind he knew most about; lode mines were not so alluring to him."*

[www.donaanacountyhistoricalsociety.org](http://www.donaanacountyhistoricalsociety.org)

President: Dennis Daily  
Vice President: Dr. Jerry Wallace  
Secretary, Newsletter, Review & Website: Jim Eckles  
Treasurer: Garland Courts  
Historian: Vacant  
Past President: vacant  
At-Large Board Members:  
Luis Rios  
Sally Kading  
Heather Reed  
Dr. Susan Krueger  
Faith Hutson  
Jim Eckman, SNMHR Editor  
Luis Rios, Education and Scholarships  
Heather Reed, Farm&Ranch Heritage Museum Liaison

2023 Board of Directors

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

