

# DOÑA ANA COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Committed to encouraging and promoting a greater appreciation and knowledge of the historical and cultural heritage of Southern New Mexico since 1963.



## 59th Annual Awards Banquet January 31, 2026

Welcome.....	Dennis Daily, DACHS President
Lunch.....	La Posta
Installation of 2026 Officers and Board Members.....	Dennis Daily
Awards Presentation.....	Faith Hutson & David Brown, DACHS Awards Committee

**Hall of Fame:** *The Hall of Fame Award recognizes an individual who is known for exceptional contributions to the preservation of the history and culture of the Mesilla Valley. The contribution should be of a substantial nature and be evidenced by enduring and observable worth to the Doña Ana County Historical Society and the community at large.*

### Jim Eckles



Jim Eckles served as Public Affairs Specialist and Range Historian for the White Sands Missile Range from 1977 to 2007. During that time, he educated thousands of people on the important history of WSMR. In addition to serving as primary information source at the range, he led tours, wrote news releases and feature stories, led families of former ranch owners on tours of their old properties, developed the WSMR Public Affairs website, appeared on about 2,400 radio spots about WSMR, created commemorative signs, and much more. He has been a crucial member of the DACHS Board for many years, serving as secretary, managing the newsletter, website, Southern New Mexico Historical Review, awards program and banquet, arranging field trips, and providing excellent leadership. His contributions to DACHS have been significant and enduring. He retired from the board in 2025. Jim gives historical presentations on many topics related to WSMR, as well as on Camp Cody and other topics. He is on the Historical Society of New Mexico speakers bureau, and he is the only person who knows where the treasure of Victorio Peak is really located.

**Heritage Award:** *The Heritage Award is given to a person or persons whose actions or deeds have contributed to the historical or cultural heritage of Doña Ana County and who is (are) not professional or avocational historians.*

### Dr. Blanca Araujo Director of the Teacher Education Program at NMSU



The history of Stahmann Pecan Farms is fairly well documented, but Blanca Araujo, who grew up on Stahmann Farms, knew a big part of the story was missing. In 2016, Araujo and colleagues in NMSU’s Department of Education began collecting the oral histories of former Stahmann Farms workers and their families, eventually compiling dozens of recorded interviews. Araujo’s project focused on stories and perspectives rarely told of the people whose labor supported the success and growth of what became one of the largest family-owned pecan orchards in the world. Last year, Araujo put together a photographic exhibit at Branigan Cultural Center, “Deeply Rooted: Stories From Stahmann Farms,” which presented snapshots of life at Stahmann Farms and

the small communities that existed there – Stahmann’s was essentially a self-contained community, with housing for workers and their families, a clinic, gas station and company store. In all of these projects, Araujo has led the effort to capture, preserve and offer to the public new perspectives on an important part of the story of agriculture in the Mesilla Valley.

**Building Worthy of Preservation:** *The award is given to encourage an owner to preserve the uniqueness of a building in Doña Ana County that is distinguished by its age and historical character, its historical significance, or that represents historical architectural character. Residential, commercial, and industrial buildings are eligible.*

### **WC Kruger Building - The 1st National Bank Building and the Manuel Gregorio Acosta murals in the lobby - 500 S. Main, Las Cruces**

Frank Papen commissioned Willard Carl Kruger (1910–1984) to design the First National Bank building in Las Cruces (later Wells Fargo), a notable mid-century modern structure offering a classic Southwestern bank design that prioritized functionality and aesthetic appeal for its era and had drive-through services. This building is known for its clean lines, distinctive windows, and integration with the desert landscape, showcasing typical Kruger elements like flat roofs, window walls, and modern-style massing. Kruger was an American architect born in Sperry, Texas, who grew up in Raton, New Mexico. He founded W. C. Kruger and Associates firm, which designed a number of Los Alamos buildings, as part of the Manhattan Project. Kruger graduated with an engineering degree from Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College in 1934, then worked in New Mexico’s State Planning Division. He served as New Mexico’s “State Architect” from 1936 to 1937.



Papen commissioned Manuel Gregorio Acosta, at the recommendation of Peter Hurd, to create a large mural for First National Bank in 1962. Acosta completed a large fresco entitled “History of the Mesilla Valley.” The piece totaled 9 panels and 540 square feet of space. Manuel Acosta would go on to become a well-known national artist, including his portrait of Cesar Chavez in 1969 that made the cover of Time magazine, and the Las Cruces mural being included in an article by Life magazine of best public art in commercial buildings. His work is represented in a number of public and private collections throughout the United States, including the National Portrait Gallery, Washington; the El Paso Museum of Art; the Museum of Texas Tech University, Lubbock; the Museum of New Mexico, Santa Fe; Harmsen’s Western Collection, Colorado; and the Time, Incorporated, collection, New York City.



**Buildings and Properties with Historical Significance:** *This designation can be applied to a property, including a district, a building, structure, or object, which is at least fifty years old. Criteria used to evaluate historic significance of a property include association with a significant historic event or person and/or incorporation within the property of historic characteristics of a period of time or a method of construction or an architectural style.*

### **1. IKARD’S FURNITURE STORE - 101 E. Lohman, Las Cruces**

Ikard’s furniture store in Las Cruces was founded in the early 1940s by John Amzi Ikard as a propane and appliance store in a location on Main Street. It was expanded to include furniture by his son John Milton Ikard in 1956, and the current location at Lohman and Main was built in 1966. The family-owned business is now run by Chris and Justin Ikard and has been a staple of the community for over 75 years. The current store at the corner of Lohman and Main streets features two levels of furniture display. Chris and Justin Ikard took over ownership in 2001, continuing the family-owned tradition. Today, Ikard’s furniture store remains a family-operated small business, known as one of the most successful privately-held home-furnishing retailers in the Western United States. This building has some elements that make it very Wrightian, and Frank Lloyd Wright was one of the

main proponents of Mayan Revival in the 1920s and 1930s. The Wrightian elements, specifically are its rectilinear massing with strong vertical lines and a dominant cornice. It is a Modern/New Formalist building with a classical composition (base, body, and cornice), strong vertical elements, cantilevered sills, and very deliberative geometric pattern repetition at the cornice.



## **2. Site of Eugene Van Patten Hall (Roller Skating Rink) 1885 410 N. Armijo, Las Cruces**

The Rink Theater started as a roller skating rink and was built in 1885 by Albert Eugene Van Patten as both a skating rink and dramatic playhouse — hence its name. Due to the popularity of roller skating in the late 1880s, Van Patten opened a 60 foot wide by 160 foot long building at the site now designated as 410 N. Armijo street - the second such skating rink in Las Cruces. The rink also doubled as a theater for dramatic performances until it became the first movie theater in Las Cruces. On April 27, 1907 the first moving pictures were shown over a 4 day period. The first night featured a live play followed by the Millar Brothers Diorama which was a “magic lantern slide show;” the second night presented 17 French-made films with the main feature called “Ye Haunted Wayside Inn’ The third night also offered a selection of French-made films with the main film being “The Chimney Sweep”, while the fourth night’s program consisted of comedies, location films, and a historical feature called “The Finding of America”. Unfortunately, the original building was demolished and currently a triplex of apartments has occupied the site since 1950. We know the location of the Rink Theater based on an 1893 Sanborn Fire Insurance map. The movie theater fad was now established and numerous others were opened in and around Las Cruces and Mesilla to accommodate the growing industry.

**Endangered Historic Property:** *This designation is used to identify a historic building or structure, a site, or landscape that is endangered because of a threat to its continuing historic significance. The threat may come from neglect or abandonment, urban sprawl, inappropriate zoning or natural weathering.*

## **Historic Doña Ana Village Cemetery - Corner of Ledesma Rd & Joe Gutierrez St.**



For the past 40 years, the Doña Ana Village Historic Preservation Committee has shown what a small group of dedicated volunteers can do. The group formed largely to restore the village’s beloved Nuestra de Señora de Candelaria Church and other historic properties, in partnership with groups including the Historic Preservation Education Foundation, Cornerstones Community Partnerships, and Mesilla Valley Historic Preservation, among others. DAVHPC also worked to preserve some of the 19th-century adobes along Cristo Rey Street near the old church and along the historic El Camino Real Trail. The main goal of the group these days is preserving the original village cemetery, the burial place of many of the village’s founders. Last year, the group led DACHS members on a tour of the cemetery, which is not fenced and contains many

unmarked, damaged or poorly marked gravesites. The group is raising money for the preservation effort, and DACHS members received an update on that project at the end of last year’s speaker series. The village of Doña Ana is the earliest non-native settlement in southern New Mexico, originally settled in 1843 under the Doña Ana Bend Colony Grant. The village’s historic district is on the National Historic Register. *(more photos on the back)*

**Noteworthy Restoration or Renovation Award:** *This award recognizes a restoration of an historic building in Doña Ana County, not necessarily adhering to strict preservation standards.*

## **Taylor-Mesilla Historic Site - 2350 Calle Principal, Mesilla**

DACHS wishes to recognize the restoration of the Taylor-Mesilla Historic Site by acknowledging the people who worked to accomplish it. The Noteworthy Restoration or Renovation is awarded to the three groups who shaped the Taylor-Mesilla Historic Sites museum. **First**, we want to acknowledge the amazing generosity of the

Taylor family for donating the home and its extraordinary collection of Spanish Colonial, Mexican, and New Mexican artwork. This donation reflects their deep desire to promote a better understanding and appreciation of the history, culture, and architecture of New Mexico. **Second**, we want to recognize the Friends of the Taylor-Mesilla Historic Site whose mission is to assist the New Mexico Department of Cultural Affairs in its development and operation of the Taylor-Mesilla Historic Site as a premier historical, cultural, educational, and community resource for visitors to and residents of Mesilla. Taylor-Mesilla Friends do so through fundraising, lobbying, advocacy, programs and special events, and recruiting volunteers. **Finally**, the awardees include local representatives of the NM Department of Cultural Affairs. We acknowledge all the hard work that the staff has accomplished in a very short period of time to turn this fabulous house and its incredible collection of art, textiles, and artifacts into an outstanding showcase of life in Mesilla and the region.



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**Gemoets Prize:** *The \$100 Gemoets Prize is awarded to the author of the “Outstanding Article” in the current issue of the Southern New Mexico Historical Review as determined by the Editor. It may also be awarded to an individual who made a significant contribution to the development and continuance of the Review. The award was established by Doris and Martin Gemoets, longtime supporters of the Review.*

### **Guinivere Mayse**

Guinivere Mayse is being recognized for her article “Women Belong on Campus: The College Life of Mary Daniels”. Guinivere describes Mary’s life, from early childhood to her experience pursuing a college degree at what are now UTEP and NMSU. Guinivere also documents Mary Daniels Taylor’s long career as a photographer and historian, including her book *Mesilla, New Mexico, 1848-1872, A Place As Wild As The West Ever Was*, which is one of the best local histories written. One of Mary’s lasting legacies was initiating the Durango Microfilming Project with the NMSU Rio Grande Historical Collections, in which more than a million pages of materials from the Archive of the Archbishopric of Durango were microfilmed. Yet as Guinivere points out, “like many women in historical narratives, her contributions are often overshadowed by those of her husband,” something which her article perhaps hopes to correct. The family home of Mary Daniels Taylor and her husband J. Paul Taylor was certainly in the news a lot last year, with the opening of the Taylor-Mesilla Historic Site in November. J. Paul would have likely given much of the credit to his wife Mary for making that house a home, and as a peer and partner in all their collective academic pursuits. A graduate of NMSU with degrees in art history and history, Guinivere explores in her work intersections of feminist, queer, and Black visual and cultural histories, and is currently serving as lead curatorial interim for a private car collection in Sunland Park.

**Stoes Prize:** *The \$100 Stoes Prize recognizes outstanding writing or editing in the current issue of the Southern New Mexico Historical Review. Selection is by DACHS Board.*

### **Hannah Augustyniak**

The namesake of this award – the prolific local historian Katherine D. Stoes - would no doubt praise fellow historian Hannah Augustyniak for her article “The Wednesday Literary Club: The Role of Women in Las Cruces, 1940-1974,” which explores various civic improvement efforts in Las Cruces led by women. Stoes was a charter member of the Woman’s Improvement Association (WIA) and active in other organizations that Hannah describes so well in her article. Far from being just a “book reading club,” Hannah writes that the WLC meetings often centered around world history, international affairs, classical literature, and local history and cultures, and informed the social and political views of the members. Hannah’s article suggests the group’s activities represent-



ed a sort of Southwestern feminism, with many of the members active and effective in local civic affairs over the course of decades. Hannah is currently a junior at NMSU pursuing a double-major in anthropology and history, with minors in religious studies and archaeology, which she says inform her approach to women's history. The Woman's Improvement Association surely would have joined in the accolades for Hannah's detailed and comprehensive account of women's civic action in mid-20th century Las Cruces.

**Hiram Hadley Prize:** *The \$100 Hadley Prize recognizes the best article on pioneer history (1840-1900) in the current issue of the Southern New Mexico Historical Review. Selection is by the Review Editor. The award is named in honor of Hiram Hadley, pioneer educator and civic leader.*

## **Troy Ainsworth**

Throughout much of his career, Troy Ainsworth has focused on border history and on the sort of characters he explores in his article "Warren Fay Shedd of San Augustine Springs," who he describes as a "shadowy and minor contributor to the Mesilla Valley's story." Troy pieces together the documentary fragments of Shedd's life here on a ranch in the late 1800s, including the small hotel he ran at San Augustin Springs on the east side of the Organ Mountains. He weaves an engaging, detailed story of an early southern New Mexico pioneer who came to the area as mysteriously as he left. Troy earned his Ph.D in Philosophy in Land-Use Planning, Management, and Design with a specialization in Historic Preservation from Texas Tech University. The former historic preservation specialist for the city of Las Cruces, Troy has contributed to numerous academic and historical journals and publications, as well as delivered talks to conventions and other events, most recently at last year's New Mexico-Arizona History Convention here in Las Cruces (with his son and fellow historian Troy Ainsworth), and a widely-viewed talk about the 1935 Las Cruces Flood for the Preserving History and Democracy podcast.

**Pasajero Del Camino Real:** *This award is given to author or authors of a significant historical publication about events, persons, places or issues in Doña Ana County or the nearby area. The Society should strongly consider works by its members and those persons living and writing in Doña Ana County.*

## **1. The Doña Ana County Clerk's Office**

The Preserving History and Democracy Podcast was launched in 2023 by Bernardine Caporale and Cynthia Mendoza of the Doña Ana County Clerk's Office. Bernardine a document technician driven by her passion for history, and Cynthia a communications coordinator, with background in radio, were tasked with creating a podcast that would highlight the Clerk's Office and raise awareness of the incredible historical documents it preserves. That same summer, Jacob Slaughter—a young media talent with broad experience—joined the office as an intern and became part of the podcast's production team. Since then, the Clerk's Office has released 93 episodes, featuring a wide variety of engaging guests and fascinating topics that explore the rich history of Doña Ana County. Topics have ranged from the mysterious death of Ovide "Cricket" Coogler, the development of the Bellamah homes in Southern New Mexico, Shalom Colony, the birth of White Sands Missile Range and much more.

## **2. George R. Matthews**

George R. Matthews is a Las Cruces author who has written on topics such as the Olympics, baseball, and Zebulon Pike. He is a member of the Biographers International Organization and the National Coalition of Independent Scholars. His 2025 book, "Billy the Kid: The Life Behind the Legend", digs deep into the story of Henry McCarty, a.k.a. Henry Antrim, William H. Bonney, Billy Bonney, Kid Antrim, the kid, or most famously Billy the Kid. With a great storytelling flair, George elaborates on Billy's early years, as well as the life of his mother, Catherine McCarty. This important background information sets the stage for the momentous events, more widely known, of Billy's part in the Lincoln County War. George's telling of the events of the Lincoln County War, a major part of the book, provide clear detail to help the reader understand the context of events, the factions involved, and the roles and relationships of the many, many participants. The book is an excellent addition to Billy the Kid and Lincoln County War scholarship.

## *Old Doña Ana Village Cemetery*



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