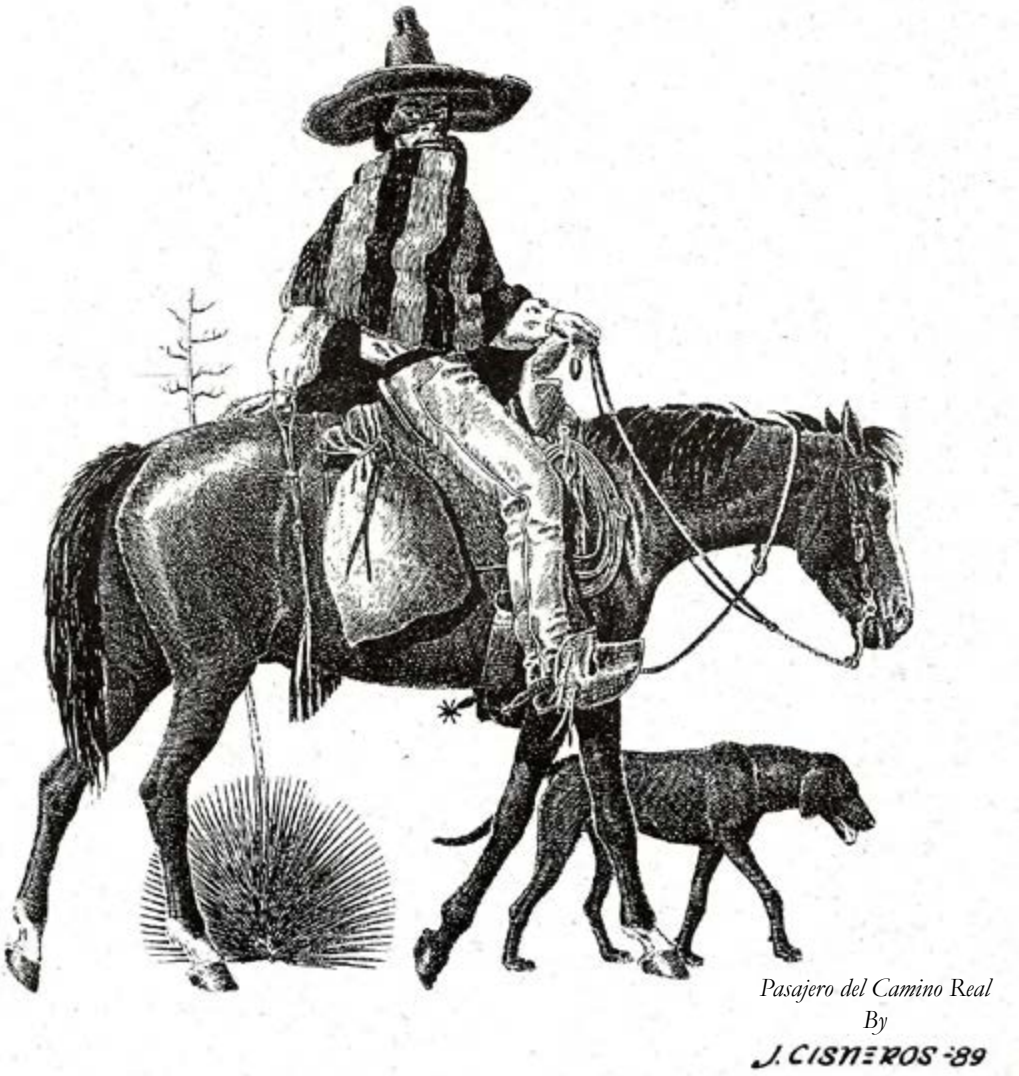
ISSN 1076-9072

SOUTHERN NEW MEXICO HISTORICAL REVIEW



Pasajero del Camino Real
By

Doña Ana County Historical Society

Doña Ana County Historical Society

Publisher

Cover Drawing by Jose Cisneros
(Reproduced with permission of the artist)

The *Southern New Mexico Historical Review* (ISSN-1076-9072) is looking for original articles concerning the Southwestern Border Region. Biography, local and family histories, oral history and well-edited documents are welcome. Charts, illustrations or photographs are encouraged to accompany submissions. We are also in need of book reviewers, proofreaders, and someone in marketing and distribution.

Current copies of the *Southern New Mexico Historical Review* are available for $10. If ordering by mail, please include $5.00 for postage and handling. Back issues of the print versions of the *Southern New Mexico Historical Review* are no longer available. However, all issues since 1994 are available at the Historical Society's website: http://www.donaanacountyhistsoc.org. The PDF files or parts of them can easily be downloaded and printed. Correspondence regarding the ***Review*** should be directed to the Editor of the *Southern New Mexico Historical Review* at Doña Ana County Historical Society, P. O. Box 16045 Las Cruces, NM 88004-6045. Email messages can be sent to: 19dachs63@gmail.com

Putting Together My Last Review

I have been putting together the ***Southern New Mexico Historical Review*** since 2016. It starts early every year by soliciting articles from members and anyone else out there with a penchant for southern New Mexico history. Over the months, I work with authors on formats, deadlines, and hopefully getting good images that have a high enough resolution to be printed (probably one of the hardest parts of the job). As the deadline approaches in October, it is time to take stock and see if there is enough material to even have a *Review*. I admit there were a couple of times going into October that I was concerned.

Then it on to coordinating with the editor. After the editor is done, the next task is the actual lay out of the *Review* so it looks good and is something you can easily hold in your hand. This is a tedious process that requires hours of being tidy and neat and, often, relearning the software. Then it is off to a print shop to put it on paper - the old fashioned way. Interestingly, it seems that most of our members still want a paper copy in addition to whatever they can find on the website. At one point, we tried to make two lists for the *Review*, those that wanted it printed and those that would download it from the website. When it became obvious we weren't going to save much money by cutting down on the number printed, we just reverted to printing one for each member. That attitude may have changed now and a new board of directors will have to look at the issue again.

For years our printing has been done at **ABC Printing** in downtown Las Cruces, Frank Silva is the owner and a strong supporter of folks doing history about the Mesilla Valley. Frank and his people have been easy to work with and always put out a timely quality product at a reasonable price - especially for a non-profit like DACHS. Once we get the box of *Reviews* back, it is necessary to distribute them to the current membership - at the annual awards banquet and by USPS. Also, authors get free copies and those have to be mailed out. Finally, there is the need to turn the *Review* into an interactive PDF and post it on the DACHS website so people anywhere in the world have access to it.

That is pretty much it except you have to start the wheel turning again in February. It basically never stops.

My thanks to all of the authors who have made my Octobers easier to get through. Also, thanks to the various editors I've worked with over the years. Now we need to convince them to write an original piece for the next *Review*. In fact, I imagine many of you have a small family story or historical event that the rest of us might find interesting. I encourage you to write it up and submit it. Don't worry about an academic approach. Think more about how you just might save a story for posterity right here.

Jim Eckles

Editor's Note

I am privileged to once again edit the 32nd edition of the Dona Ana Historical Society Historical Review. This year's edition is a collection of wonderful articles, essays and book reviews representing many hours of research on the part of the authors.

This year's edition includes, in no particular order --

- Treachery and Tragedy in Sonora at the Cañón de Los Embudos by Frank J. Brito
- To New Mexico, with Love: The Taylor-Mesilla Historic Site by Alexandra McKinney
- The Death of Mary Alzada Waters by Sal Patricolo
- The Wingfields of Ruidoso by Stephanie Long
- The First New Mexico Mental Health Act by Joe Alexander
- Helen Haines, Age 19, Author of "History of New Mexico" (1891): She Wrote it Without Having Ever Left New York City by Doyle Daves
- The Ballard Photo Studio: A Portrait of Community, an exhibit of photos put together by the NMSU Library Archives and Special Collections
- Who Was Doc Nos, the Finder of 450 Tons of Gold? by Jim Eckles

Two book reviews are included --

- Restoring the Pitchfork Ranch: How Healing a Southwest Oasis Holds Promise for Our Endangered Land by A. Thomas Cole, Reviewed by Dylan McDonald.
- The Colfax County War: Violence and Corruption in Territorial New Mexico by Corey Recko, Reviewed by Jim Eckles

This year's Gemot's Prize is awarded to Doyle Daves for his well-researched article entitled, "Helen Haines, Age 19, Author of "History of New Mexico". This is an interesting read about a book authored by a young woman living in New York City who never actually visited the state of New Mexico. It's a personal look at some of the people who immigrated into the state during the 1800s. Some were good, some were not.

This year's Hiram Hadley Prize for Pioneering History Article goes to Frank J. Brito for his excellently researched article: Treachery and Tragedy in Sonora at the Cañón de Los Embudos.

I'd like to thank our retiring Secretary, Jim Eckles, for his outstanding effort in assembling and printing the annual historical review. His efforts make my editing job much easier. His dedication to the DACHS for so many years has been unwavering. The society will miss his exemplary work.

I thank the Doña Ana Historical Society for the privilege of editing this year's Historical Review. It is another wonderful collection of articles by authors dedicated to recording the history of Southern New Mexico.

Jim Eckman, Editor

Southern New Mexico Historical Review

Volume XXXII **Las Cruces, New Mexico** **January 2025**

Contents

Click On The Article You Want To Go To

Articles and Essays

Book Reviews

Memorial

The opinions expressed in the articles are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the Doña Ana County Historical Society.

Helen Haines, Age 19, Author Of "History of New Mexico"

She Wrote It In 1891 Without Ever Leaving New York City

Gemoets Prize for Outstanding Article

By Doyle Daves

This 1891 book by Helen Haines, *History of New Mexico, From the Spanish Conquest to the Present Time, 1530-1890*,[1] has been in my research collection for some time and, on a few occasions, I have consulted it and found useful information.

Recently, I became curious as I knew nothing of Haines and did a little searching. I was astounded to learn the facts included in the title. It is likely that Haines' accomplishment is unique in two ways: undoubtedly, she is the youngest author to have published a serious history book (631 pages) and also, she is surely unique in using only the resources of local libraries (principally the New York City Public Library) and never visiting the site of her study.[2]

Helen Elizabeth Haines (1872-1961)[3] grew up in New York City. When she published the book Helen was a 19-year-old girl living with her parents and four younger sisters; she did not attend a school but was taught (home-schooled) by her mother. It is likely that the book was undertaken as an educational project-perhaps a sort of "senior thesis." In a brief Preface and Introduction, she explained how the subject for the project was chosen. First, she noted that "Americans... know very little of the history of their own country..."[4] Secondly, she declared that New Mexico was exotic: "The Territory of New Mexico presents one of the most striking examples of 'that new world which is the old.'"[5]

The material for the book came from an impressive bibliography (74 sources) of earlier publications written by established scholars and New Mexico visitors with extensive and/or unique experiences of the Territory and its people.

Haines is a fine writer and the story she pieced together for the 350-year period she covers is comprehensive and insightful, although not original. An unusual feature of the book is the large section devoted to brief biographies of selected New Mexico residents. The present account is focused on men of southern New Mexico and the borderlands whose profiles were included; (very few women were included)**.** Biographical information presented here is heavily dependent on more recent sources.

Biographical Sketches of Southern NM Leaders in 1880-1890

In contrast to northern areas, southern New Mexico had few permanent settlements south of Socorro before the United States takeover of 1846-1848. The principal reasons were the much higher tendency of the Rio Grande spring floods to destroy irrigation infrastructure and create new channels and the intense pressure from marauding Apaches in this, their homeland. As a result, although a few of the men profiled were natives, most had arrived in the area after 1850 and many after 1880.The bio-sketches were not the work of Helen Haines, but were provided to her by G. E. Yerger, who was presumably attached to the New York Public Library (see Preface). No information about Yerger has been found.

Deming

Warren Henry Bristol (1823-1890), a New York native, arrived in New Mexico in 1872 after practicing law in Minnesota for 22 years. Bristol and his wife, Louisa C. (Armstrong) Bristol, settled first at Mesilla where he served as a New Mexico Territorial Supreme Court Justice; he presided at the trial of Billy the Kid for the mur-

der of Sheriff William Brady.[6] In 1885, he moved to Deming where he was president of the Deming Land and Cattle Company.

Helen Haines, History of New Mexico, page 297.

Maxwell Chapman (1856-1925) arrived in New Mexico in 1885 and settled with his wife, Kate A. (Ryon) Chapman, in Deming. He was born in Pennsylvania and worked in civil and topographical engineering and later in railroad construction in Mexico. In New Mexico, with support of Ohio investors, he incorporated the Buckeye Land and Live Stock Company of which he served as manager. In 1912, Chapman sold his holdings in New Mexico and returned to Pennsylvania (Wilkes-Barre Times Leader, March 21, 1825).

Helen Haines, History of New Mexico, page 475.

Charles Henry Dane (1851-1904) arrived in New Mexico with his wife, Mary Louisa (Chase) Dane and settled in Deming by 1882. Dane, from Massachusetts, attended college in Michigan, then trained in the law in California. In Deming, he opened a bank and later opened one in Silver City. We learn from other sources[7] that Dane, as a banker, "exhibited no conservatism, but... used... deposits... to promote various uncertain enterprises..." Dane's bank was closed by the controller of the currency in 1892.

Helen Haines, History of New Mexico, page 368.

Albert Seaman Field (1829-1907) arrived in New Mexico in 1883 and settled in Deming. Field, a native of New York, was a businessman in New Orleans and Texas before joining the Confederate army and serving to the end of the Civil War then, after 12 years in the northern states relocated, with his wife, Achsa (Minis), to New Mexico where he was appointed United States Collector of Customs. He served as President of the Board of Trustees (Mayor) of Deming upon its organization.[8] Field also owned valuable gold, silver and lead mines at the Columbus mining district in the Tres Hermanas Mountains.[9]

Helen Haines, History of New Mexico, page 407.

Thomas Signor Robinson (1851-) arrived in Deming by 1886-7 where he married and started a family. The 1900 US census for Deming lists Thomas, born in New York, with his wife, Mary Jane (Hopkins) Robinson, her mother and the 3 Robinson children, all born in New Mexico. The *Deming Herald* reported (December 16, 1902): "T. S. Robinson, merchant, has been absent from the city for nearly a week and his store is closed." A later report noted that "One evening he closed his store and hopped a train leaving his Deming family never to be seen again."

Helen Haines, History of New Mexico, page 624.

Fort Stanton

James Joseph Dolan (1848-1898) arrived in New Mexico in 1869 when he located at Fort Stanton in Lincoln County. Dolan was born at Galway, Ireland but came to New York with his parents at age five. He joined the Union Army in 1863 and re-enlisted for a term of three years in 1866. When discharged, he traveled to Fort Stanton and became a clerk with L. G. Murphy & Co. In 1879, Dolan married Caroline Fritz. Dolan had a long and successful career that included several appointed and elected governmental positions culminating with an appointment by President Benjamin Harrison as receiver of the land office. Inevitably, Dolan became involved in the notorious Lincoln County War[10] (which Haines did not mention); for which most historians have strongly criticized his actions.[11]

Helen Haines, History of New Mexico, page 371-372.

Georgetown/Pinos Altos

Monroe Toby (1858-1940) arrived in New Mexico in 1879; he first stopped in Silver City but after a short time settled in Georgetown where he opened a mercantile store which he operated for about a year. He then left New Mexico, traveled through Colorado then to New Orleans where he had spent much of his early life. After again returning to Georgetown and reopening and op-

erating a store, he again returned to New Orleans where he formed a mining syndicate to operate at Pinos Altos. At Pinos Altos, Toby re-established his mercantile business but also served as a broker in the sale and financing of mining properties (Silver City Enterprise, January 3, 1890). By 1900 he was no longer in New Mexico; he never married.

Helen Haines, History of New Mexico, page 356.

Hillsboro/Kingston

William Harris (1860-1936) arrived at Kingston, probably in the early 1880s. He was born in California but his parents were from Rhode Island and by age four, William and his family had returned there (1865 Rhode Island State Census).[12] William studied mining engineering at Brown University and was appointed as a mineral surveyor. He served as Superintendent of the Illinois mine near Kingston. In 1888, William married Catherine (Kate) Burnside: after a decade and having three children at Kingston, the family left New Mexico for Colorado. They relocated again to California where William died in 1936 and Kate in 1957.[13]

Helen Haines, History of New Mexico, page 491.

Alexander M. Storey (1845-about 1921) arrived in Kingston in 1882. He was born in Crawford County, Pennsylvania, then moved as a youth with his parents to Nebraska. During the Civil War, Storey served with the 2nd Nebraska Cavalry, 1862-1864. In 1876, he was in Colorado and became involved in mining which took him to Utah and Arizona and finally to Kingston. There, he purchased the “Iron Clad” group of mines which he developed and improved and then sold to St. Louis investors. By 1889, Story was sheriff of Sierra County. That year, he married Florence Maye Smith and established a home in Hillsboro (*Santa Fe New Mexican*, August 2,1889). By 1900 the couple and left the state and eventually returned to Pennsylvania.

Helen Haines, History of New Mexico, page 418.

Hot Springs (Truth or Consequences

Edward Fest (1850-) arrived in New Mexico in 1870 as an Ohioan and a private in the Eighth Cavalry. When he mustered out in 1875, he entered the sheep and cattle business with indifferent results. Selling out in 1882, he located at Cuchillo Negro,[14] a village a short distance west of present-day Elephant Butte Lake and Truth or Consequences. There he opened a mercantile store and soon became prosperous. In 1884, he assisted in organizing Sierra County and later represented Sierra and Grant Counties in the Territorial Legislature.

Helen Haines, History of New Mexico, page 523-524.

Las Cruces

Nestor Armijo (1831-1911) is a New Mexico native, born in Albuquerque, who made his home in Las Cruces beginning in 1873. He was a member of one of the wealthiest, most politically dominant families of New Mexico. At age nine, he was enrolled at St. Louis University[15] where he studied six years before returning home. Nestor was soon participating in business with his father, Juan Cristobal Armijo. An indication of the scope of their business: “Cristobal, Rafael, Nestor and Juan Armijo owned a piece of all the [Santa Fe Trail] wagons reported traveling through Council Grove in 1859.” Later, “to facilitate their careers ...Juan Cristobal Armijo... supported the Chihuahua business operations of his sons, Nestor and Nicolas.[16] After settling in Las Cruces, Nestor reactivated the banking activities he had pursued in Chihuahua, speculated in real estate and continued to operate as a commercial trader, freighter and wholesaler. In 1851, Nestor married Josefa Yrisarri; they were parents of 2 sons.

Helen Haines, History of New Mexico, page 297-298

Henry Joseph Cuniffe (1826-1896)[17] arrived in Las Cruces in 1850 and it remained his home and business headquarters the rest of his life. Irish-born, Cuniffe arrived in St. Louis at age fourteen to join his mother and other relatives

who had come to America earlier. As a young man, he enlisted in the army and was with General Kearny's Army of the West in the take-over of New Mexico in 1846. Immediately after his discharge, Cuniffe traveled back to Missouri to obtain trade goods and opened a store on the Santa Fe Plaza. He served as a customs official at nearby San Miguel del Bado in 1848 then moved to Las Cruces and opened a store. Throughout his life, Cuniffe balanced his business interests with government service, both territorial and federal. During the Civil War he was United States Counsel stationed at El Paso, El Paso del Norte (now Juarez) and Chihuahua at different times. He befriended Mexican President, Benito Juarez and reported on the Mexican Civil War to Secretary of State, William Seward. Cuniffe married Francisca Lujan in 1854 in Mesilla and fathered sixteen children. Three of his daughters were sent to St. Louis to attend boarding school.[18]

Helen Haines, History of New Mexico, page 595

Jose Guadalupe Ascarte (1842-1925) arrived in Las Cruces probably in the early 1860s. Ascarte was born in Chihuahua to a wealthy ranching family. He was sent to school at San Antonio. As a young man he freighted in territory strongly contested by Indian (Apache?) raiders; luckily, he was never injured. By 1870, the family had left Mexico and settled on the Tortugas Ranch west of Las Cruces. When his father died, Guadalupe was left with 2,000 fine cattle and developed an extensive ranching operation in both New Mexico and Mexico. He has served Dona Ana County as Sheriff and as County Commissioner. In 1874 at St. Genevieve's Church in Las Cruces, Guadalupe married Elena Fletcher. The couple raised a family of 5 children.[19]

Helen Haines, History of New Mexico, page 488

Phoebus H. Freudenthal (1854-1922) arrived in Las Cruces in 1870. He was born in Germany and, as a teenager, traveled directly to Las Cruces where he became a clerk in the store of his cousin, Henry Lezinsky,[20] where he worked until 1882. Then, with help from his father, Phoebus opened his own store which prospered such that in 1888 a new, larger building was constructed. Phoebus was active in the Las Cruces community, serving as Dona Ana County Treasurer and also was treasurer of the newly founded Las Cruces College. He was a principal in the establishment of the Leasburg Dam, a forerunner of the Elephant Butte Dam and began the establishment of the extensive irrigation system that has developed. About 1896, he moved to near Safford, Arizona where he engaged in banking while continuing to operate the farms near Las Cruces. Phoebus traveled to New York City where he was married to Miss Amelia Lowy. Upon his death in 1922, he was survived by his wife and two sons.[21]

Helen Haines, History of New Mexico, page 435

Martin Lohman (1854-1911) arrived in Las Cruces in 1876. Martin was born in St. Louis; his parents had immigrated from Germany. In 1882, in partnership with Numa Reymond (see below), the firm of H. Lezensky & Co. General Merchandise was purchased (see P. H. Freudenthal, above); five years later, Martin acquired full ownership of the firm which he built into one of the largest in New Mexico. He served a term as County Superintendent of Public Instruction and was a delegate to the Territorial constitutional convention of 1889. Martin Lohman married Aminda Schaublin in1883; they had a single son.[22]

Helen Haines, History of New Mexico, page 553-554

Oscar Lohman (1860-1923) arrived in Las Cruces in 1884 from his home in St. Louis to join his brother Martin (see above). He opened a grocery store which he sold after a few years. In 1892, Oscar was elected as county sheriff and later held several public offices while remaining active in business. He acquired a ranch in the Organ Mountains where he raised cattle and goats. At one time, his goat herd numbered more than 4000, one of the largest goat herds in New Mexico. Oscar married Alice B. Cuniffe (see Henry J. Cuniffe above).[23]

Helen Haines, History of New Mexico, page 317

John Robert McFie (1848-1930) arrived in Las Cruces in 1884 to take up the position of Register of the Land Office to which he was appointed by President Chester A. Arthur. McFie, a native of Illinois, served during the Civil War in the 13th Illinois Infantry under General Sherman during his march on Atlanta. Following his service in the land office at Las Cruces, McFie was appointed by President Benjamin Harrison as a justice of the New Mexico Supreme Court. McFie played a central role in the establishment of, first, Las Cruces College and, then in 1888, what is now New Mexico State University. McFie served as chairman of its first Board of Regents and helped guide the institution for many years.[24] He married Mary Barr Steel in 1876 in Illinois; the McFie’s had a family of five children.

Helen Haines, History of New Mexico, page 284, 288

Numa Reymond (1847-1915) arrived in New Mexico in 1862-1863 from his native Switzerland. He began his New Mexico career by operating stage lines across the Santa Fe Trail with contracts to deliver the U S mail. In this endeavor, many encounters with hostile Indians and outlaws occurred. Later, Reymond built a large commercial business at Paraje, once the supply center for a large area of central and southern New Mexico.[25] Reymond moved his business operations to Las Cruces upon the arrival of the railroad there in 1881. He partnered with Henry Lezensky (see Martin Lohman, above) in the mercantile business. He was a major stockholder of the Bennett-Stephenson mine in the Organ Mountains which, in 1898 yielded $3 million.[26] Reymond was actively involved in founding what is now New Mexico State University and served on its first board of Trustees.[27] Reymond married Catherine Elizabeth Crecelius in 1878; they had a son who died before reaching maturity.

Helen Haines, History of New Mexico, page 574

William Logan Rynerson (1828-1893) first arrived in New Mexico in 1862 as a soldier of the California Volunteers. He was born in Kentucky but was in California at the onset of the Civil War. Much of his service in New Mexico was centered at Fort Bayard. When he was discharged, he moved to Las Cruces, where, in 1872, Ryerson married Luciana Pope, a widow with several children. He engaged in mining in the Organ Mountains and also acquired land and established a small ranch. He served as Dona Ana County District Attorney.[28] Perhaps the most well-known incident of Rynerson’s life occurred in Santa Fe in 1867 when he met Supreme Court Chief Justice John P. Slough in an attempt to settle a long-standing feud between the men. In the event Rynerson shot and killed Slough; when tried for the shooting, Rynerson pleaded self-defense and was acquitted.[29]

Helen Haines, History of New Mexico, page 326, 329-330

Jacob Schaublin (1827-1905), a native of Switzerland, arrived in New York in 1852 and came to Las Cruces in 1860. He built and operated a large flour mill; in addition, he owned well maintained and productive orchards and vineyards. In 1865, Jacob married a widow, Bertha Ohnesorge. His step-daughter Aminda married Martin Lohman (see above). Jacob was a member of the first Board of Regents, with John R. McFie and Numa Reymond (see above) of what is now New Mexico State University.[30]

Helen Haines, History of New Mexico, page 326

Nathan Spatcier (about 1830-1898) a native of Austria, arrived in Las Cruces by 1880 (US census) as a widower. The census indicates that he was a clerk in the same merchandise establishment as Phoebus Freudenthal and Martin Lohman (see above). Later, Spatcier turned to farming and developed the La Flor Del Valle Farm just west of Las Cruces and became quite successful; his orchards were particularly impressive.

Helen Haines, History of New Mexico, page 504

Horace F. Stephenson (1834-1914) may have been in Las Cruces briefly as a boy, but was in business there by the time of the 1870 U. S. census. He was born at El Paso del Norte (Juarez)

to Hugh Stephenson (1798-1870) who arrived in the Rocky Mountains in the early 1820s as a fur trapper and he became a Santa Fe Trail-Chihuahua trader. Horace's grandfather, Andrew Stephenson, was a representative to Congress from Virginia and served as Speaker of the House, 1827-1834.[31] Horace married Maria Simona Dutton[32] in 1859 and lived with her in Mexico until the onset of the Civil War in which he joined the Confederate Army. After the war, Stephenson continued his mercantile business, including a store in Las Cruces, until 1874 when he switched to cattle and sheep raising. Then in 1879, he again shifted his interest to serve as county clerk and then as deputy U. S. Marshall of Dona Ana County.[33]

Helen Haines, History of New Mexico, page 495

Mariano Barela (1844-1892) was born in Mesilla and lived out his life there. His father, Anastacio Barela, was a prominent merchant with a business on the Mesilla Plaza. As unrest at the approaching Civil War reached Mesilla, Mariano's father, a Confederate sympathizer, transferred ownership of his business property to his wife Rafaela (Garcia). Interestingly, the business was housed in a store-front which is now the northern half of the Plaza facade of the Taylor-Mesilla State Monument recently donated by J. Paul and Mary Taylor.[34] For some years, Mariano worked with his mother to operate the store. However, Mariano soon entered politics and was elected sheriff and tax collector of Dona Ana County; he remained active in public affairs and served in other capacities.

Helen Haines, History of New Mexico, page 573

Joseph Francis Bennett (1830-1904) arrived in New Mexico in 1862 as a soldier serving with the California Infantry Volunteers who marched to New Mexico when the Confederates (Texans) invaded in 1861. Bennett, a New York native, was involved in Indian wars in Colorado in 1864, He had married Mexican-born Dolores (Lola) Patton. When he mustered out of the army in 1866, now a brevet Major, he and Lola made their home in Mesilla where he operated stage and freight lines from Santa Fe to El Paso and Tucson. Joseph and Lola raised a family of seven children. After 1900, Joseph and Lola moved to Mexico City where they both died.[35]

Helen Haines, History of New Mexico, page 476, 479

Demetrio Chavez (1851-1905) was born in Tome in Valencia County; he was two when his mother died and was raised by his grandmother until he was nine, then placed in St. Michael's College in Santa Fe. Demetrio father became a priest and, in 1859, became the first priest to serve at St. Genevieve in Las Cruces.[36] At fourteen, his education finished, Demetrio became a store clerk in Albuquerque. He soon moved to Las Cruces and then Mesilla where he established his own mercantile store which he operated the rest of his life. He served as county treasurer and was also probate judge; he served as a regent for what is now New Mexico State University. Demetrio married Luisa Gonzales in 1881 at Mesilla; the couple raised a family of ten children.[37]

Helen Haines, History of New Mexico, page 570

Silver City

Jose Arturo (Joseph Arthur) Ancheta (1865-1899) was born in Mesilla into a prominent family; he was educated at St. Michael's College in Santa Fe and then at Notre Dame in Indiana. In 1887, he was admitted to the practice of law in New Mexico and joined a partnership with a respected senior attorney in Silver City. The resulting firm became highly successful. Ancheta served as District Attorney for Grant and Sierra Counties. He married Antonia A. Trevino and had two. children.[38]

Helen Haines, History of New Mexico, page 496

Howard Hoyt Betts (1855-1923), born in Connecticut but grew up in New York arrived in Silver City in 1886, where he quickly became the leading wholesale and retail grocer of the area. He served the community as clerk of Silver City. He was a principal in founding the Silver City, Pinos Altos & Mogollon Narrow Gauge Railroad Com-

pany which failed when mining collapsed after the government ceased providing a price floor for silver and gold.[39] Howard was married twice, first to Clara Vanderwalker and then to Ann Amelia Newcomb and had one child with each.

Helen Haines, History of New Mexico, page 569

Samuel P. Carpenter (1849-1898) arrived in New Mexico by 1876 (when daughter Hallie was born). Carpenter born in Ohio, came west at sixteen as a pony express rider; later he worked as a driver for Wells Fargo. He came to New Mexico as a post trader at Fort Cummings and served Grant County as a county commissioner. Carpenter developed a ranch and had a large cattle herd. He married Aminda Prince (Mrs. O. C. Jones) and had a daughter. He died of pneumonia at an early age (Silver City Eagle, January 29, 1898).

Helen Haines, History of New Mexico, page 307

John William Fleming (1853- 1929) arrived in Silver City in 1880 after a short stay in Hillsboro. Fleming was born in Massachusetts of Irish immigrant parents; as a young man he became interested in mining and spent time in many of the mining districts of the American west before he arrived in New Mexico where he remained. Fleming was elected the third mayor of Silver City in 1885 and from 1888 he served as mayor until 1907,[40] In the 1880s, Fleming participated in the establishment of what is now Western New Mexico University and served as one of its founding trustees. He married Petra Romero in 1882 and fathered five children.[41]

Helen Haines, History of New Mexico, page 608

Martin Maher (1843-) arrived at Fort Sumner in 1866 as a soldier involved with the Navajo and Apache people held there before their release in 1868.[42] Maher, born in Ireland, came with his family to Ohio as a boy. After his discharge from the army, Maher worked for several years in various jobs before settling permanently in Silver City in 1874 were he returned to his early trade as a baker. As he prospered, he expanded by manufacturing crackers, pastries, adding groceries and wholesaling as well as retailing. Maher married Kate E. Howe and adopted a son.[43]

Helen Haines, History of New Mexico, page 396

William Clement Porterfield (1858-1943) arrived at Silver City in 1888; Porterfield, born in Illinois, trained as a pharmacist and, at twenty-one, began to practice pharmacy with his brother. The brothers prospered and increased their business until selling and dissolving their partnership when William moved to New Mexico to begin a solo practice. His success led the governor to appoint him to the New Mexico Board of Pharmacy. William married Margarette Wilson in 1883 in Illinois; the couple raised two sons.[44]

Helen Haines, History of New Mexico, page 411

White Oaks

Urbain Ozanne (1835-1903) arrived in White Oaks in Lincoln County in 1880. He was born in France and arrived in Louisiana at age fifteen and remained in the southern states until the move to New Mexico. In White Oaks he established a stage company to carry the U, S, mail and provide passenger service to the railroad. White Oaks became a mining boomtown but was devastated when the government ceased its guarantee of silver prices in 1893.[45] Ozanne married (1) Frances Stephanie Bouvard and later (2) Eugenie Desyloa and fathered eleven children.

Helen Haines, History of New Mexico, page 431

Doyle Daves, a New Mexico native who grew up in a ranching family near Clayton, is a retired academic educator and scientist with a career in institutions across the nation. He is now living in Las Cruces with his wife Pamela and stays busy writing and publishing articles, mostly about nineteenth century New Mexico history and the Santa Fe Trail.

End Notes

1. Helen Haines, *History of New Mexico, From the Spanish Conquest to the Present Time, 1530-1890* (New York: New Mexico Historical Publishing Company, 1891).

2. No evidence has been found that Haines ever visited New Mexico, although, in later life, she lived in California for many years. She was a lifelong scholar, focusing primarily on library science, with many publications but wrote nothing further about New Mexico.

3. Haines, Helen E., 1872-1961, encyclopedia.com/media/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps,haines-helen-e-1872-1861, accessed March 2024.

4. Years later, Erna Ferguson would agree: "New Mexico was little known but there it was, sprawling from wherever Texas ended to wherever California began." Erna Ferguson, *New Mexico, A Pageant of Three Peoples* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1952), 248.

5. Helen Haines, *History of New Mexico*, iii, 1.

6. Judge Warren Henry Bristol, 1823-1890, Find A Grave Memorial, findagrave.com/memorial/61683345/warren-bristol, accessed April 2024.

7. George B. Anderson, *History of New Mexico, Its Resources and People*, Vol., (Los Angeles: Pacific States Publishing Company, 1907), 849.

8. George B. Anderson, *History of New Mexico*, Vol. 1, 840.

9. Robert Julyan, *The Place Names of New Mexico* (A;buquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2996), 91.

10. William A. Keleher, *Violence in Lincoln County, 1869-1881* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1957).

11. "James Dolan-Bad Boy of the Lincoln County War," legendsofamerica.com/we-jamesdolan/, accessed April 2024.

12. Abraham Wilkinson Harris, Rhode Island State Censuses, 1865-1935, Ancestry.com, accessed June 2024.

13. Catherine "Kate" Burnside, Ancestry.com, accessed June 2024.

14. Robert Julyan, *The Place Names of New Mexico*, 103.

15. Doyle Daves, "Education and the New Mexico Elite During Santa Fe Trail Days," *Wagon Tracks*, 33 (No. 4, August), 2019.

16. Susan Calafate Boyle, *Los Capitalistas, Hispano Merchants and the Santa Fe Trade* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1997), 94, 105.

17. Doyle Daves, Henry J. Cuniffe, "Santa Fe Trail Trader, Pioneer Settler of Las Cruces," *Wagon Tracks*, 38 (No.2, February), 2024, 23-27; Evelyn R. Rosen, "Henry J. Cuniffe, the Man and his Times," PhD Dissertation, University of Texas at El Paso, 1951.

18. Doyle Daves, "New Mexico Daughters Sent to School in St. Louis," *Wagon Tracks*, 33 (No. 3, May), 2019, 15-20,

19. Jose Guadalupe Ascarte Zosolla, Ancestry.com, accessed 2024.

20. Tomas Jaehn, *Jewish Pioneers of New Mexico* (Santa Fe: Museum of New Mexico Press, 2003), 18.

21. Phoebus Freudenthal, Obituary, El Paso Herald, May 12, 1922.

22. Martin Lohman, Ancestry.com, accessed June 2024.

23. Oscar Lohman, Dona Ana County, New Mexico Genealogy Village, nmhgp.genealogyvillage.com/cty/oscar_lohman_dona_ana_countyNew_mexico.html, accessed June 2024.

24. John Robert McFie, probate.com/web/john_robert_mcfie/1069630#google_vignette, accessed June 2024.

25. Paraje, now essentially a ghost town, is located on the east bank of the Rio Grande south of Socorro and Ft. Craig: Robert Julyan, *Place*

Names of New Mexico, 258. Contemporary news articles suggest its importance: "The Bouiller Bros. Of Paraje shipped 400 head of cattle from here" (*Albuquerque Citizen*, January 2, 1900; "The [route] change will be a serious misfortune to the Mexican freighters of Paraje." (*Las Vegas Daily Optic*, June 28, 1889).

26. *El Paso Herald*, June 7, 1899,

27. George B. Anderson, *New Mexico, Its Resource and People Illustrated*, Vol II (New York: Pacific States Publishing Company, 1907), 564; Numa Reymond, Obituary, *El Paso Herald*, October 18, 1915.

28. J. Young, William Rynerson, palsofbillythekidhistoricalsociety/william-rynerson/, accessed June 2024/

29. "New Mexico's Old Times and Old Timers, The Rynerson-Slough Duel," aaalivestock.com/old-times-and-old-timers-39/, accessed June 2024.

30. Jacob Schaublin, Find A Grave, Ancestry.com. Accessed June 2024.

31. Max L. Moorhead, *New Mexico's Royal Road, Trade and Travel on the Chihuahua Trail* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1954), 118; n 1828, Hugh Stephenson traveled to Santa Fe with a caravan then headed down the Camino Real and "arrived at Chihuahua after many adventures with the Indians and much suffering from hunger and thirst." See: Louise Barry. "The Beginning of the West, Annals of the Kansas Gateway to the American West, 1540-1854" (Topeka: Kansas State Historical Society, 1972), 148.

32. Simona's father, Louis Dutton, was an early fur trapper who operated from Taos beginning in the early 1820s. David J. Weber, *The Taos Trappers, The Fur Trade in the Far Southwest, 1540-1840* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1968), 122-123.

33. Simona Stephenson, Obituary, *Las Cruces Sun-News* December 22, 1921.

34. New Mexico Mesilla Plaza and Mesilla Historic District, nps.gov/articles/000/new-mexico-mesilla-plaza-and-mesilla-historic-districtd.htm, accessed June 2024.

35. Joseph Francis Bennett, Sr., Find A Grave, Ancestry.com, accessed June 2024.

36. Manuel Felipe de Jesus Chaves, Ancestry.com, accessed June 2024.

37. Demetrio Chavez and Joseph Reynolds Family Papers, New Mexico Archives Ob=nline, accessed July 2924; Demetrio Chavez, Dona Ana County, New Mexico, The History and Genealogy Project, accessed July 2034/

38. Joseph (Jose) Arturo Ancheta, Ancestry.com, accessed August 2024.

39. Colonel Howard H. Betts Grant County, New Mexico, https://nmahgp.genealogyvillage.com/cty/colonel_howard_h_betts_grant_county_new_mexico.html; Howard Hoyt Betts, Ancestry.com, accessed August 2024.

40. Grant County, New Mexico https://nmahgp.genealogyvillage.com/cty/grant_county_new_mexico.html, accessed August 2024.

41. John William Fleming, Find A Grave, accessed August 2024.

42. Raymond Bial, *Great Journeys: The Long Walk – The Story of Navajo Captivity* (New York: Benchmark Books, 2003).

43. Grant County, New Mexico Biographies and History, Martin Maher, http://genealogytrails.com/newmex/grant/bios.html

44. William Clement Porterfield, Ancestry.com, accessed August 2024.

45. Urbain Ozanne, White Oaka New Mexico Gold Rush, https://www.whiteoaksgoldrush.com/urbain-ozanne/, accessed August 2024.

Return To Table Of Contents

Treachery and Tragedy in Sonora
At the Cañón de Los Embudos

Hadley Prize
for
Pioneering History Article

By Frank J. Brito

This article first appeared under a different title in the Los Angeles Westerners Corral publication *The Branding Iron*, Spring 2024 issue No. 314. It has since been updated and amended.

In late 1872, the U.S. Government made an inhumane decision that was to affect thousands of lives. The San Carlos Apache Indian Reservation was established in the hot Arizona desert inhospitable to Eastern Chiricahua tribes accustomed to their mountain homelands. Four years later in 1876, the forced relocation of the Chokonen Chiricahua Apaches into this reservation was in accordance with the ill-advised "Indian Concentration Policy." Not only were the Chiricahuas moved there, several different bands of Western Apaches from central Arizona were already present with an estimated overall population of 5,000 at its maximum, though this number seems too high.[1]

Figure 1: John Clum in center, San Carlos Apache Reservation Manager, 1875. Left and right are Diablo and Eskiminzin, Indian Police, each from two different Western Apache tribes. Photo courtesy of Library of Congress, public domain.

The Dutch Reformed Church was placed in charge of the Apaches and John Clum (Figure 1), a church member, became a supporter of concentration. In 1874 he was appointed the Agent of San Carlos and sent there to manage these highly disparate bands of Apaches, often antagonistic to one another and commonly discordant linguistically. Truly, some Apachean inter- tribal hostility could be characterized as "traditional enemies."

The San Carlos concentration policy in 1872 began a fourteen-year alternating series of quietude, violence, and escapes. This included fleeing Apache bands that depredated ranching families, miners, and travelers north and south of the Mexican border. Hundreds were killed with women and children kidnapped amid losses occurring in livestock, personal property, firearms, and ammunition.

The economic consequences in Arizona and New Mexico were widespread mine closures, with abandonment of ranches and farms. With accompanying military expenses, these losses surely exceeded any economic benefit of concentration. The Northern Mexican states of Sonora and Chihuahua were also heavily plundered with many lives and properties lost.

Simultaneous with the establishment of the San Carlos Reservation, Cochise, as the respected chief of the Chokonen Band of Chiricahua Apaches, desired to end hostilities with the Americans. This was a long-sought mutual goal desired by both the U.S. Government and Cochise. General Oliver Otis Howard secured a treaty with Cochise in 1872 ending the eleven-year war.

Upon the recommendation of General Howard, and by President Grant's December 14 Executive Order, a new reservation was established for Cochise's Chokenens in the Southeast corner of

Arizona (Figure 2). It included his homeland of the Chiricahua and Dragoon Mountain Ranges. With a few exceptions by individual hostiles, the other three Chiricahua bands likewise remained somewhat peaceful. Thus, depredations were minimal in Arizona for a time.

This was not quite the case in Mexico, as the southern border of this new Chiricahua reservation was contiguous with the northern border of Mexico and raids into that country continued. Mexico was not a party to this treaty with Cochise because its people were hated by the Apaches and considered a fair source of plunder.[2] Creating a substantial and embarrassing problem was Section XI of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. This Treaty, signed by Mexico on February 2, 1848, ended the Mexican War. It was ratified by the United States on July 4, 1848. A portion of Treaty Section XI states:

Suppression of Savage Indian Raids Into Mexico
Purchase of Captives or Stolen Property Prohibited
Return of Captives to Mexico

Considering that a great part of the territories which, by the present treaty, are to be comprehended for the future within the limits of the United States, is now occupied by savage tribes, who will hereafter be under the exclusive control of the government of the United States, and whose incursions within the territory of Mexico would be prejudicial in the extreme, it is solemnly agreed that all such incursions shall be forcibly restrained by the government of the United States whensoever this may be necessary; and that when they cannot be prevented, they shall be punished by the said government, and satisfaction for the same shall be exacted – all in the same way, and with equal diligence and energy, as if the same incursions were meditated or committed within its own territory, against its own citizens.[3]

The terms of the Treaty's Section XI placed full responsibility on the U.S. Government for incursions into Mexico by Apaches based in the United States with compensation for any resulting damages. This included seizing and repatriating any Mexican civilian captives. Restraint of the Apaches by the agency was impossible to enforce with the Chiricahua Reservation resting on the Mexican border. Moreover, it was nearly impossible to comply when the Chiricahuas bolted from San Carlos. These problems to solve were placed squarely on the shoulders of the U.S. Military.

Cochise died of natural causes in 1874 with hereditary leadership of the Chokonens passing to his oldest son, Taza, a worthy successor who also desired peace. Unfortunately, during an 1876 visit to Washington DC, Taza contracted and then succumbed to pneumonia. Inheriting the vacant chief's position was Naiche (Figure 6), the 20-year-old younger brother of Taza. Also in 1876, President Grant (Figure 3), surrendered to mining interests and the political pressures of Section XI, ordering the closure of the Chiricahua Reservation in Southeast Arizona.

The Chokonens were then moved to San Carlos under The Apache Concentration Policy. It can be argued that Cochise's death, the vacuum in Chokonen leadership upon Taza's death and Naiche's youth, thus diminished the young son's abilities to lead, control and advocate for the band. Raiding into Mexico was also a principal factor for the relocation. The factors of reservation closure, the Chokonen Band's removal and internment into San Carlos further weakened their governance.

The disavowed promise to Cochise for his own reservation by the U.S. Government was a common example of broken treaties to our nation's First Peoples. These government pledges of land in perpetuity were always self-serving to the politicians or business interests, expediently revocable and outright deceitful.

Further bewildering to the Apaches were the unfamiliar concepts of "land ownership" and geographic "borders." They were a nomadic people, shifting with the seasons for centuries to pursue game, locate water and edible vegetation, raid pueblos and evade enemies. Permanent confine-

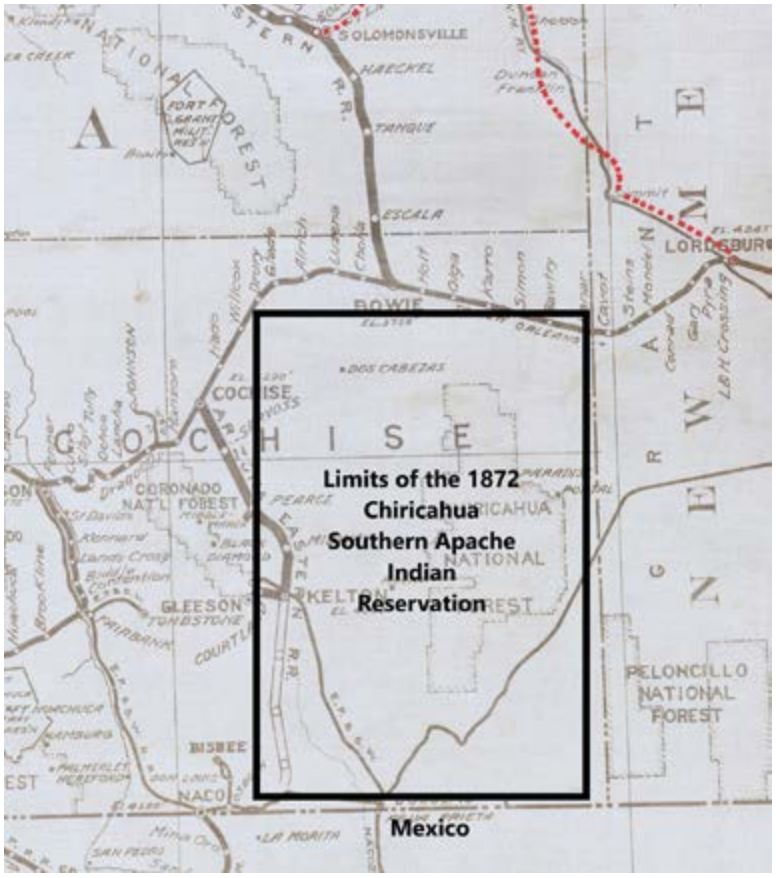


Figure 2: An approximate depiction of the Chiricahua Reservation in Arizona's southeast corner. It was negotiated by General Oliver Otis Howard and granted to Cochise and his Chokonen band through Executive Order by President Ulysses Grant in 1872. The eastern (right hand) border ends at the New Mexico Territory line, the bottom border is contiguous with Mexico. This reservation encompassed the traditional "Cochise Stronghold" consisting of the Dragoon and Chiricahua Mountain Ranges. The reservation lasted less than 4 years. Excerpt with added boundary from Image 305482_08325_01, courtesy of National Archives and Records Administration.

ment into a specific terrestrial area was an unthinkable concept.

Enter Gerónimo

Weary of Gerónimo's (Figure 4) escape and depredations, an order was received in early 1877 by San Carlos Agent John Clum to detain and transport him and his band to San Carlos. In April, Gerónimo and his band arrived at the Ojo

Figure 3: President Ulysses Grant, unknown date. In 1872 the San Carlos Reservation was created during his term of office. That same year, the Chiricahua Reservation was created in Southeast Arizona. Photo courtesy of the Library of Congress.

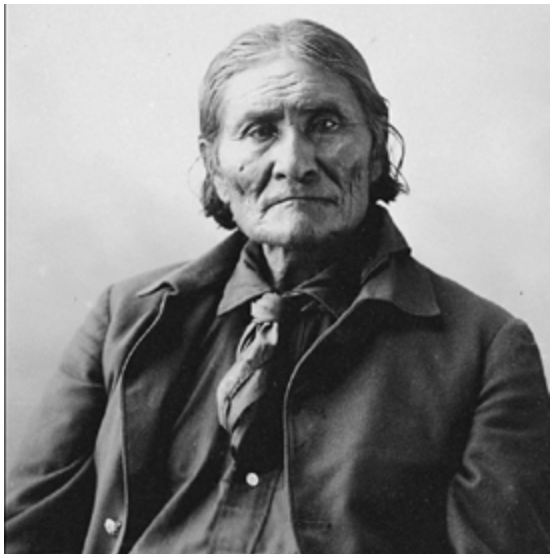


Figure 4: Gerónimo, in an 1898 photo by A. Rinehart, taken either at Ft. Sill, Oklahoma or the Trans-Mississippi Exposition in Omaha, Nebraska. Public Domain.

Caliente ranchería of Victorio, a Warm Springs (Chihenne) Apache Chief. John Clum was waiting with his contingent of Apache Police and arrested Gerónimo in a tense confrontation with rifles ready on both sides.

Seeing this was a trap with no chance of escape and with a look of hatred on his face, Gerónimo submitted to arrest and was shackled by a blacksmith.[4] This was perceived by him as a deep insult to his pride. In the 1850's, Gerónimo's wife, mother and children had been killed by Mexicans and his desire for revenge against that country remained unabated. Now, his mistrust of the Americans deepened.

Adding to Gerónimo's loathing of capture, he was deprived of his horse, placed in a wagon, and transported in irons to the San Carlos Reservation for confinement (Figure 5). Once there, his shackles were eventually removed and he was released from custody, free to circulate among his fellow Chiricahuas, but no doubt carefully watched.

Figure 5: San Carlos Reservation Guard House, San Carlos, Arizona. Gerónimo and other misbehaving Apaches would have been jailed here. 1880 photo by C. S. Fly in public domain.

As a young boy, Naiche was surely familiar with Gerónimo as a well-known medicine man and war leader of the small Bedonkohe band. Never a chief, Gerónimo's escapades on both sides of the border had brought trouble to both the belligerent and peaceful Apaches. He was not universally liked by all Chiricahuas.

After his capture, Gerónimo was now inside San Carlos with Naiche's Chokonen band. More warlike than his brother Taza and now socializing with his fellow Apaches, Naiche became allied with Gerónimo's small group. Naiche's alliance with Gerónimo is enigmatic because Naiche was the Chokonen chief, but appeared to be guided by Gerónimo.

Figure 6: Naiche, wearing a U.S. Army Indian Scout uniform. A 1913 photo by Adolph Ruhr, taken at Fort Sill, Oklahoma. Courtesy of U.S. Library of Congress.

Samuel E. Kenoi was an Apache youth during the Gerónimo Wars and his father was a Chiricahua warrior contemporary to Gerónimo. Morris Opler, the eminent Apache anthropologist interviewed Kenoi who said, "Naiche was a good man in some ways, but you couldn't civilize him. He liked his Indian dancing, and he liked his fighting, and he liked his drinking. You could make a good soldier out of him, and that was all. He was always influenced by Gerónimo."[5]

Perhaps it was a joining of these two small bands to increase their numbers or Naiche valued Gerónimo's skills as a warrior, advisor, and powerful medicine man. In these characteristics, the two and their many followers united for several U.S. and Mexican raids.

My conjecture is that Naiche considered his father's treaty broken through the closure of the southern Chiricahua reservation and he chose a justified moral detour. This reservation was another empty government promise in which his father naively placed faith. The removal of his band to the inhospitable San Carlos Reservation by the *Bi'ndah-Li'ghi'* or "White Eyes" was added deceit.

In his book, Thrapp believes that Naiche and Gerónimo first appear as allies in September 1880, making a break from San Carlos. Centered on rumors and always suspicious, they erroneously

believed U.S. troops were being sent to arrest them over the Cibecue Affair.[6] This conflict resulted in a gun battle at Cibecue Creek where several soldiers were killed based on the Western Apache prophet Nakaidoklini's visionary predictions of ultimate Apache victory over the White Eyes.

The Chiricahua Breakout

The Chiricahuas were not involved, but may have been present at this Cibecue religious ceremony. Increasingly skittish, rumors of approaching rifle-bearing soldiers sent Naiche and Gerónimo's band escaping into Mexico. In October 1881, They recrossed the border into Southern Arizona and their band attacked a freighter in Sulphur Springs Valley, Arizona. That same month, they also engaged in a sharp fight in the Dragoon Mountains with U.S. soldiers.[7]

In April 1882, Gerónimo and Naiche again combined to attack civilians in Southeastern Arizona. One of the attacks occurred near the Gila River close to York's Ranch. Felix Knox, a gambler traveling with his wife and family were attacked by Naiche's band. The family escaped to the ranch house in their wagon, but Knox, leaping from the wagon to defend his kin, was killed while returning fire. He successfully delayed the Apaches from killing everyone. (Figures 7 and 8).

The Apaches often mutilated their victims believing they would be doomed to disfigurement in the afterlife. They chose not to mutilate Knox possibly honoring him for his bravery. Late in April, Naiche and Gerónimo's band had increased to nearly 400 and was extremely active in Southern Arizona engaging in fights with the Army and raiding ranches for livestock and arms.

In May 1883, through February 1884, the Chiricahuas were extremely active in Sonora, Mexico with bands led by Gerónimo, Naiche and Ulzana (Chokonen band). Pursued by the U.S. Army high into the Sierra Madre, Naiche and Gerónimo's band were located by enlisted Apache Scouts. A gathering of hostile Apache bands under several chiefs assembled on May 23, 1884 to confer with General George Crook (Figure 9), commander of the Department of Arizona.[8]

The bands promised to return to San Carlos, all except the Nednhi Chiricahua band. They slowly filtered into the San Carlos Reservation, were relieved of their arms, and confined. This was an uneasy time with much dissatisfaction by the Chiricahuas. They were deprived of cultural cus-

Figure 7: The white buildings in the background are York's Ranch, still occupied. The bare area at the base of the fence post is the remnant of the wagon road. The site is in York, Arizona. Brito 2014 photo.

Figure 8: Frank Brito standing at the monument placed by the Arizona Highway Department honoring Felix Knox's heroism in protecting his family. Brito 2014 photo.

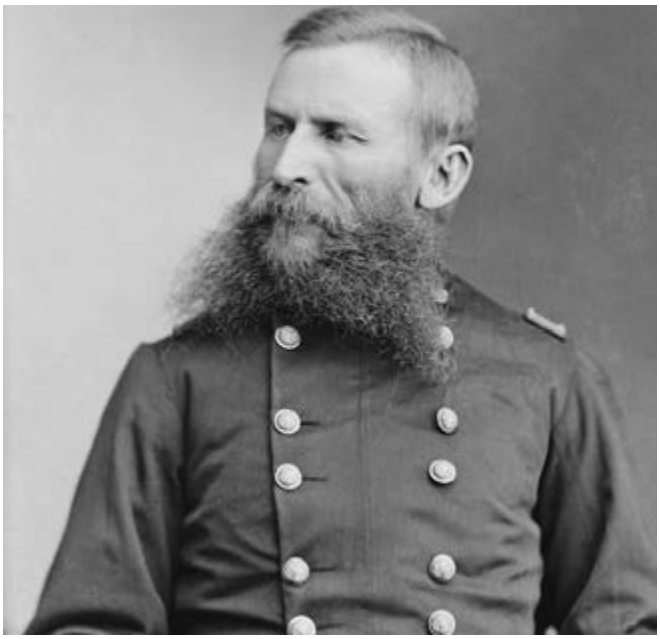


Figure 9: George Crook, as a Civil War captain above and later a brigadier general commanding the Department of Arizona. He led failed negotiations with Gerónimo at Cañón de Los Embudos in Sonora, Mexico, and was subsequently replaced. Photo courtesy of the Library of Congress.

toms such as drinking *tizwin*, a mildly alcoholic corn liquor and the custom of beating their wives for adultery.

In May 1885, as a constantly troublesome presence in San Carlos, Gerónimo plotted and then failed to assassinate a despised Army lieutenant. Fearing retribution and learning of a planned attempt on his life by the more peaceful Chiricahuas, Geronimo and Naiche's group fled the reservation into Mexico. Turning his back on the warpath, Chato[9], a former hostile, Bedonkohe Chiricahua Chief and feared Apache leader, now enlisted as an Army scout, agreed to help lead his men into the Sierra Madre to locate the fleeing Apaches.

After the Chiricahuas escaped, their attacks commenced in Arizona and New Mexico at frequent intervals under Gerónimo, Naiche, Mangas (Chihenne band, son of Mangas Coloradas) and Chihuahua (Chokonen band). Breaking into smaller groups, they repeatedly returned to Mexico for more raiding until their eventual surrender and exile.

This study is limited to Naiche and Gerónimo's group, as they represented the most wanted of the Chiricahua Apaches that eventually met with General Crook in the Cañón de Los Embudos. Other Chiricahuas, primarily the Nednhi band, rejected surrender and sought refuge in Mexico's remote Sierra Madre.

Mexico was the homeland of the Nednhi and they continued sporadic raiding on both sides of the border at a reduced scale due to their smaller numbers. Kühn's research provides a precise chronology of these depredations occurring before and after the larger group of Chiricahuas were exiled to Florida.

The Chiricahuas are Tracked

No doubt exasperated, General Crook assembled a large group of soldiers and Apache Scouts and spent nearly three months in Mexico tracking Gerónimo's whereabouts. The wily Apaches slipped back into the U.S. with new depredations resulting. They returned to Mexico in November 1885 with fresh supplies and horses carelessly left unguarded by ranchers. The year ended with Gerónimo and Naiche on the loose with General Crook and the Army struggling to make a new plan while fending off stiff public criticism.

A new pursuit into the Sierra Madre was made early in 1886. Deep in these mountains, the Apache Scouts located Gerónimo and Naiche's camp. Shots were exchanged and the Apaches retreated without casualties. Seeing that his mountain camps and hiding places were no longer beyond reach thanks to Apache Scouts, Gerónimo agreed to a parley. The Apache band's horse herd and provisions had been captured in this skirmish resulting in a woman messenger from Gerónimo requesting a conference.[10]

Gerónimo asked Crook to meet him to negotiate a surrender in a ravine called *Cañón de Los Embudos* (Canyon of the Funnels) (Figure 11) at the base of the *Sierra de Embudos* (Figure 10) in Sonora Mexico, about 20 miles south of the U.S.

Figure 10: Sierra de Embudos, March 26, 1886 photo by Camillus Fly, the Tombstone, Arizona photographer. Note the Chiricahua Apaches on the rim of the Cañón at center. Public domain.

border. The soldiers returned to Arizona based on Gerónimo's promise to assemble there to discuss terms. It took nearly two months for the Apaches to arrive in Cañón de Los Embudos from their Mexican Sierra Madre mountain camps, but their promise was kept.[11]

Our Search

Bill Cavaliere, former Sheriff of Hidalgo County, New Mexico, and that county's historian, organized a visit to Cañón de Los Embudos. His friend, Ramón Nieblas, has an uncle that owns the ranch that included the site of Gerónimo's camp and surrender site. Ramón's brother-in-law, Juan Díaz, is a cowboy familiar with the areas we wished to visit. The excursion was arranged for travel on dirt roads near the sites and a hike was necessary into the historic spots themselves.

On September 30, 2004, we gathered in the border town of Douglas, Arizona and crossed into Agua Prieta in Sonora, Mexico. Our group included Dan Aranda, Bill Cavaliere, Juan Díaz, George Hackler, Berndt Kühn, Ramón Nieblas and the author. Taking two vehicles, we picked up Juan Díaz in Agua Prieta and he guided us on Sonora Highway 2 about 30 miles east to an unmarked dirt road leading southeast. Several miles later and reaching a slightly elevated spot, our vehicles were parked and a long hike commenced, first to

Figure 11: Apache conference with General Crook in Cañón de Los Embudos. Gerónimo is seated at left center. General Crook is seated on the right wearing a pith helmet and gloves. Note the Apache warriors standing on the steep banks of the Cañón on the right. Also note the trees in the background. Camillus Fly photo, March 25, 1886 in the public domain.

the area of the Apache camp (Figures 12 & 13), then into the deep Cañón itself.

The Apaches camped in a defensible area near the Cañón rim (Figure 12). Large red volcanic boulders were strewn about the area, and the always wary Naiche and Gerónimo ordered the construction of barricades to defend themselves if attacked. The warriors placed the women and children away from their encampment and the U.S. soldiers wisely established their camp in a different area.

On March 25, 1886, "The *ranchería* (temporary camp) of the hostiles was in a lava bed, atop a conical hill surrounded by steep ravines, some five hundred yards from [Lieutenant] Maus's camp and separated from it by a difficult arroyo. After Crook had lunch, Gerónimo and some of the Chiricahuas warily approached."[12] What is remarkable here is that although not a chief, at this important conference Gerónimo had assumed the mantle of spokesman rather than Naiche. A

Figure 12: Photo by Camillus Fly at the rim of Cañón de Los Embudos with his caption: "Scene in Gerónimo's camp before surrender to General Crook, March 25, 1886 – group in Natches' [Naiche's] camp, boys with rifles." The linguistically challenged Americans were unable to pronounce or spell "Naiche" and referred to him by the names "Natchez," "Nachez" or "Natches."

Figure 13: The well-known Camillus Fly photo of Gerónimo and his family. L – R, Yanozha, Gerónimo's brother-in-law; Chappo, a son from his second wife; Fun, his half-brother; and Gerónimo. Note the background terrain and ocotillo plants on the Cañón rim. Camillus Fly photo taken March 25, 1886 in public domain.

Figure 14: Compare this photo to Figure 13. Our group standing at the exact location of Gerónimo's family 118 years later. L – R rear: George Hackler, Dan Aranda, Juan Díaz, Berndt Kühn, Frank Brito, Ramón Nieblas; front: Bill Cavaliere. George, Berndt, and Bill re-enact the Apache poses with mescal quiotes rather than rifles. Note that the spindly ocotillo plants on the right still grow at this site. September 30, 2004, Brito photo.

meeting was arranged below in the Cañón de Los Embudos, a steep hike down from the lava rim camp of the Apaches.

Our group spent about an hour examining the locations of the Apache camps on the rim and was followed by a search to locate the exact site where Fly's photo in Figure 13 was taken. It was soon found near the large lava rock to Gerónimo's left. Except for small vegetation changes this site was unaffected from 118 years past compared to our

visit in September 2004.

We assembled to re-enact the photo in Figure 13 using *quiotes* (mescal stalks) as sham rifles (Figure 14). Compare the two photos to view our re-enactment standing in the footsteps of Gerónimo and his family.

A Conference in Cañón de Los Embudos

The Cañón de Los Embudos was the nearly dry channel of the Río Embudo. On our visit, it was a deep and narrow arroyo with steep rock-lined walls with sycamore and *alamo* (cottonwood) trees growing in the riverbed. They appear in the background of the conference site (Figure 11). There were shallow pools of clear water on the riverbed's smooth rock bottom and evidence of bent and deposited brush higher up in the rocks indicating strong waterflows during monsoon seasons.

Angie Debo, in her biography of Gerónimo, described the meeting and location in detail based on Captain John Gregory Bourke's diaries. Debo states the talks began with Gerónimo delivering a long harangue about why he had broken out and was on the run. Though Naiche was the legitimate and hereditary Chiricahua chief, he allowed the medicine man to again speak for him and the others. Twenty-four armed warriors were in the background observing the meeting ready to act in case they were to be seized.[13]

Crook responded bluntly that Geronimo's words were all lies. Crook rebutted all Gerónimo's statements and was closely watched by the vigilant Apache warriors positioned along the perimeter to defend against capture. No effort was made to surround the band. Crook asked Gerónimo to think over their situation and discuss their intentions in the morning. This was unnecessary as Gerónimo agreed to surrender.

Hearing the news that Gerónimo's band was near and ready to parley with General Crook, a moonshining, soulless individual, Robert Tribolett, perhaps part of the Indian Ring, set up a *jacal* (lean-to) a few hundred yards into Mexico. After the negotiations ended, he began selling his rotgut liquor to both hostiles and scouts.

Organized whiskey merchants desired that the Apaches stay footloose in the area. Apaches confined and guarded in reservations or exiled to distant states were unprofitable. Whiskey-selling was a rewarding enterprise paid for with stolen goods, livestock, and silver coin from Apache depredations in the U.S. and Mexico. These were exchanged for Indian Ring liquor and ammunition. The Indian Ring was a cabal composed of reservation supply contractors, politicians, beef ranchers, rustlers, and whiskey merchants.

September 30, 2004 in the Cañón de Los Embudos. Our group sitting in the approximate same location where General Crook conducted his negotiations with Gerónimo. Compare this photo to Figure 11. Sitting L – R: Ramón Nieblas, George Hackler, Frank Brito, Bill Cavaliere, Juan Díaz, Dan Aranda, and Berndt Kühn. Brito photo.

Apache unrest was profitable to the unethical reservation agents, their vendors, and the Indian Ring. Ranchers sold rustled commissary beef to the soldiers, with inferior cattle and goods of low quality going to the Indians. Free-spending soldiers were also profitable to Indian Ring merchants. One debased form of vendor was the il-

legal whiskey seller such as Robert Tribolett.[14]

Noisy chaos ensued that night with drunken Apaches firing rifles in their camp. Adding to the turmoil while selling them alcohol, Tribolett circulated a rumor among the Apaches stating they were to be killed once they entered the United States. "The next morning before daylight [scouts] Alchise[15] and Kaathenay (Chihenne), apparently sent by [Chief] Chihuahua, awakened Crook with the news that Naiche was lying on the ground unable to stand and that others were in the same state."[16] Chief Chihuahua agreed to surrender with his band and led them across the border into the U.S. the next day.

Unsuspecting that treachery from alcohol was brewing in the Apache camp, General Crook believed that his emissaries, Alchise, Kaathenay and Chief Chihuahua wielded enough influence to bring Gerónimo across the border into the United States.

Arriving at Fort Bowie, Crook telegraphed General Sheridan that the Apaches had surrendered. In this belief, he was betrayed and his misplaced trust was both a high tragedy for the Apaches and ended the assignment for Crook. The Apache tragedy consisted of a very different outcome from Crook's promise that upon surrendering, they would be sent east to Fort Marion, Florida for only two years as punishment.

Believing Tribolett's fabrication that they would be killed, Gerónimo and his band fled deeper into Mexico and the Sierra Madre. Not all the Apaches fled, but the more sober ones crossed the border into the U.S. fulfilling their promise to surrender. Another telegram was sent to Sheridan advising him of the escape.

General Crook, frustrated at his failure, offered to be transferred to another command. The last two sentences in his long April 1, 1886 telegram to General Sheridan are very plain: "I believe that the plan upon which I have conducted operations is the one most likely to prove successful in the end. It may be, however, that I am too much wedded to my own views in this matter, and as I have spent nearly eight years of the hardest work of my life in this department, I respectfully request that I may now be relieved of its command. [Signed] George Crook, Brigadier General."[17]

His request was approved and General Nelson Miles was appointed to replace him. Miles then began the task to find and contact Gerónimo to force him into surrender. Initially disdaining the use of Apache Scouts, he relented as this was the most effective form of tracking and negotiation. Lieutenant Charles Gatewood was placed in charge of the scouts and six months later, both Gerónimo and Naiche were again trailed to the Sierra Madre and convinced to return to the U.S. in September 1886.

Assembled at Fort Bowie (Figure 15), they learned that their families and other Fort Apache Chiricahua bands had been sent in April to Fort Marion via the Santa Fe Railroad from Holbrook, Arizona. With their families gone, Gerónimo, Naiche and the remaining Chiricahuas submitted to surrender.

Figure 15: In early September 1886, the surrendered Geronimo and Naiche and their Apache Band assembled at Fort Bowie, Arizona. They are being readied for transportation to Fort Marion, Florida. Camillus Fly photo in public domain.

Apart from the Nednhis and a few escapees who remained in Mexico, Naiche's group was placed aboard a Southern Pacific train (Figure 16) at Bowie Station and transported to Fort Pickens, Florida, an island across from Ft. Marion. Sheer treachery by our military and government was

Figure 16: Apache prisoners of war on their way by Southern Pacific Railroad to Fort Marion, Florida. Here at the Nueces River, Texas on September 10, 1886, they are stopped for a rest. At center front, the tall figure in high boots sitting alone is Naiche, Chokonen Chiricahua Chief. On his left (right on image) is Gerónimo. Photographer unknown. Image in public domain.

placing the loyal Apache Scouts on this same train.

Succumbing to local pressure, all Chiricahua Apaches, trustworthy or not, were directed to be removed from Arizona. The Apache Scouts, as U.S. Army personnel, were now labeled as Prisoners of War and relieved of their weapons and ammunition.

Treachery and Tragedy

This was altogether a great tragedy for the bands not associated with Gerónimo and the loyal Apache Scouts. Rather than confinement in Florida for two years as promised by General Crook, the Chiricahuas began an indefinite internment in unhealthful Florida prisons such as Forts Pickens and Marion and later Mount Vernon Barracks in Alabama.

More tragic was the forced removal of Apache children to Indian Schools such as Carlisle where these youths were stripped of their hair, traditional clothing, culture, language, and made to wear uniforms and shoes. Many Indian school children died of disease such as tuberculosis and pneumonia for which they had no immunity.

Young adults were "loaned out" to area farmers and tradesmen as apprentices or laborers to study their methods. Moreover, many adult Apaches were taken ill and perished from the alien and humid climates at the Florida and Alabama facilities.

With Gerónimo's reneged surrender at Cañón de Los Embudos, the government had no intention of keeping its promise of two years' confinement. General Crook made unsuccessful efforts to initiate and assist with an Apache move to a more healthful climate, but he died in 1890, just four years after resigning his command in the Southwest.

Eventually the Apaches were moved to better conditions at Fort Sill, Oklahoma. They adjusted here and were given plots of land, farming implements and livestock. Several warriors were enlisted as scouts, though all were still considered prisoners of war.

After 27 years of confinement, the Chiricahuas were given the choice of relocating to the Sacramento Mountains of Southern New Mexico on the Mescalero Apache Reservation, or to remain at Fort Sill. The majority accepted the move and established themselves in an area apart from their Mescalero cousins.

Gerónimo died in 1909 before the Chiricahuas were given the choice of returning to New Mexico in 1913. Naiche elected to accompany the larger group to Mescalero and it is stated by Apache historian Lynda Sánchez, "I believe Gerónimo, if he had been alive, would NOT have stayed in Fort Sill because he hated the entire idea of being a POW and the confinement. He would have gone with Naiche and the majority to Mescalero, just to be back on his home turf."

The best source of information for the confinement period is Alicia Delgadillo's book, which is highly recommended.[18] She has provided exhaustively researched vital statistics, a brief biography and genealogy of every known confined Apache. Today, descendants of the Chiricahua Tribe still live in both Mescalero, New Mexico and Apache, Oklahoma.

Was Gerónimo the solely treacherous individual? I feel it was a collective wrong committed by all parties: The U.S. Government in shipping the Apache Scouts to Florida and the decision to intern the Apache families in an unhealthy climate. The Indian Bureau by tearing Apache families apart by sending their children to culturally destructive schools. The Indian Ring in their shady dealings with unscrupulous suppliers, The moonshiners in supplying whiskey and lying to the Apaches. And, Nelson Miles for not sustaining General Crook's promise to return the Apaches after a two-year confinement.

Frank J. Brito is the grand-nephew of José Brito and the grandson of Frank C. Brito. He collects family artifacts and has researched the history of these two Rough Rider brothers. Puzzled with the loss of José in the Philippines, he has walked in his footsteps in two states and pored through archives hoping to find his resting place, thus far to no avail. A retired banker, Frank has written articles on California history, his family and the account of a World War Two submariner.

End Notes

1. Thrapp, Dan L.,1988 *The Conquest of Apacheria*, University of Oklahoma Press, Norman. p 303. Other sources estimate the number at 4,000.

2. Brito, Frank J., 2023 Summer Issue, "Cochise Council Rock," *Branding Iron, Number 311*, Los Angeles Corral, Westerners International. p 8.

3. *Guadalupe Hidalgo Treaty of Peace 1848 and The Gadsden Treaty with Mexico 1853*. 1967 Reprinted from New Mexico Statutes 1963, Volume One. Published by the Tate Gallery, Truchas, New Mexico. p 18.

4. Aranda, Daniel, 2023 *Episodes from Apache Lands*, ECO Publishing, Rodeo, New Mexico. pps 32-34.

5. Opler, Morris E., 1938 "The Geronimo Campaign of 1886," *New Mexico Historical Review*, October 1938, Vol. XIII, No. 4. p 369.

6. Thrapp pps 228-229.

7. Kühn, Berndt, 2014 *Chronicles of War, Apache & Yavapai Resistance in the Southwestern United States and Northern Mexico, 1821–1937*, The Arizona Historical Society, Tucson. pps 249-250.

8. Thrapp, p 290.

9. Chato was a Bedonkohe chief called by that name for his pug – shaped face. In Spanish, Chato means "flat." His name was most often spelled "Chatto" by non-Spanish speakers, the military and most authors.

10. Debo, Angie, 1986 *Geronimo – The Man, His Time, His Place*, University of Oklahoma Press, Norman. p. 250.

11. Thrapp p 342.

12. Thrapp p 343.

13. Debo p 255.

14. Also spelled "Tribolet" in various publications with sometimes the diminutive "Bob" for Robert.

15. Alchise, pronounced Al-chee-say, was a

scout under General Crook and the Chief of the White Mountain Band of Western Apaches.

16. Debo p 264.

17. Davis, Britton, 1978 *The Truth about Gerónimo*, University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln. p 217.

18. Delgadillo, Alicia, 2013 *From Fort Marion to Fort Sill, a Documented History of the Chiricahua Apache Prisoners of War, 1886-1913*, University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln.

Additional Recommended Reading

Ball, Eve; Henn, Nora and Sánchez, Lynda, 1988 *Indeh, An Apache Odyssey*, University of Oklahoma Press, Norman.

Bourke, John Gregory, 1971 *On the Border with Crook*, The Rio Grande Press, Inc, Glorieta, New Mexico.

Cavaliere, Bill, 2020 *The Chiricahua Apaches, A Concise History*, ECO Herpetological Publishing, Rodeo, New Mexico.

Crook, George, 1986 *General George Crook, His Autobiography*, University of Oklahoma Press, Norman.

Kraft, Louis, 2000 *Gatewood & Gerónimo*, The University of New Mexico Press, Albuquerque.

Lummis, Charles Fletcher; Thrapp, Dan L., Editor 1979 *Dateline Fort Bowie, Charles Fletcher Lummis Reports on an Apache War*, University of Oklahoma Press, Norman.

Sánchez, Lynda A., 2014 *Apache Legends & Lore of Southern New Mexico*, The History Press, Charleston, South Carolina.

Sweeney, Edwin R., 1991 *Cochise, Chiricahua Apache Chief*, University of Oklahoma Press, Norman.

Thrapp, Dan L., 1995 *Al Sieber, Chief of Scouts*, University of Oklahoma Press, Norman.

Thrapp, Dan L., 1992 *Juh – An Incredible Indian*, Texas Western Press, El Paso Texas.

Return To
Table Of Contents

The Wingfields of Ruidoso

By Stephanie Long

The Wingfield family arrived in the Ruidoso area in 1884. Charles Wingfield (1850-1910) came from Missouri, but met and married Mary Litton (1858-1938) in Llano, Texas. When the couple arrived in New Mexico, they took over management of the old Dowlin's Mill along the Ruidoso River. Charles and Mary also ran the store, post office, and blacksmith shop at the mill, as well as running a dairy and farm.

In 1893, Charlie homesteaded 160 acres up the valley from the old mill and purchased another 160 adjacent acres. The family built an adobe home that was the only building west of the mill until vacation cabins started to be built in the mid-1910s.

Ike Wingfield (1887-1954) was the sixth of ten children of Charlie and Mary. He has born at the mill and eventually took over ownership of the Wingfield property. In 1911, he married Lula Robinson (1890-1956) from Bonito City and built the bungalow-style home that is now the Wingfield Heritage House Museum in the late 1920s.

Ike and Lula established some of the earliest businesses in Ruidoso, serving the campers

Charles Wingfield

Panorama showing Wingfield House on left and Wingfield block of businesses across the street on the right, 1930. Various members of the Wingfield family scattered around photo.

Wingfield General Store and Post Office, 1920s

Ike Wingfield

and early motorists who were starting to vacation in the area. Some of their ventures included a general store, filling station, barber shop, roller rink, dairy, and cafe. As the town developed, Ike began developing the Wingfield property and was involved in civic betterment activities like installing phone lines and a power station, and serving as volunteer firefighter, postmaster, forest service fire warden, justice of the peace, member of the school board, and even mayor for a few years.

The Wingfield Heritage House Museum opened on October 17, 2024. Located in the historic Wingfield family home, the museum explores the early history of Lincoln County, life in the Sierra Blanca region, and the growth of Ruidoso into the town that it is today. Special exhibits explore topics related to regional history in the changing exhibit gallery. The museum is open Wednesday through Saturday, 10 am to 5 pm.

Stephanie Long is the Curator and Manager of the Wingfield Heritage House Museum in Ruidoso, New Mexico. She has been working in the museum field for over 20 years and is excited to return to New Mexico. She has worked with museums in Colorado, New York, Nevada, Texas, Georgia, and Florida, and was previously the Senior Curator of Collections for the City of Las Cruces Museums in New Mexico. She has a BA in history from Duke University and a Masters in History Museum Studies from the Cooperstown Graduate Program of the State University of New York.

Return To
Table Of Contents

To New Mexico, with Love: The Taylor-Mesilla Historic Site

By Alexandra McKinney

"Your note of April 20th concerning the Mesilla State Monument headquarters building is just received. You are correct. The old store building on the west side of the Mesilla Plaza, projected for use as the monument headquarters with some appropriate permanent exhibits, does belong to the Paul Taylors [sic] of Mesilla…" [1]

Reginald Fisher, fine art director with the Museum of New Mexico, wrote this letter in 1959 in reply to Florence Martin with New Mexico State University. Two years prior to Fisher's letter, the New Mexico State Legislature designated the Mesilla Plaza as a state monument. The plan was for the Museum of New Mexico to operate the state monument with a small museum and had even leased property on the Mesilla Plaza to be the monument's headquarters.

However, the funding to operate the "old store building" ran out and the Museum of New Mexico had to end their lease of the space. A headquarters for the Mesilla State Monument never came to fruition and the Town of Mesilla took over day-to-day operation of the plaza. For the building's owners, J. Paul and Mary Daniels Taylor, converting the "old store building" to a place for education and public outreach ultimately became part of their legacy.

J. Paul and Mary Daniels Taylor moved into a home on Calle de Parian in Mesilla in 1947 before purchasing a home on the plaza's westside six years later. The home had no electricity or plumbing, but that did not matter. They wanted to raise their family in the predominantly Hispanic community and appreciated the historic value of the property as well as its location on the west side of the Mesilla State Monument.

Over the course of the next several decades, the Taylor family called this property home. Paul and Mary painstakingly preserved the home in a way that allowed them to raise their family comfortably, adding plumbing, restrooms, lighting, and electricity. Recognizing the historic value of its location in the community, they ensured that the adaptations protected the original architectural features of the home. Additionally, they began to fill the home with an extraordinary collection of both contemporary and historic Spanish Colonial, Mexican, Native, and New Mexican artwork,

J. Paul Taylor and Mary Daniels Taylor in 1946 Photo courtesy of the Taylor Family.

furniture, textiles, and pottery dating back to the 16th century.

In 2003, they decided – alongside their seven adult children – to donate the home, two storefronts they also owned (including "the old store building"), and art collection to the Museum of New Mexico's State Monuments Division (today called New Mexico Historic Sites). The donation stipulated the site – the Taylor-Mesilla Historic Site – be used as a place to educate on the history, culture, and architecture of southern New Mexico, Mesilla, and the Southwest Borderlands.

On August 24, 2024, the first of three buildings constituting the Taylor-Mesilla Historic Site opened to the public; the same building that the Museum of New Mexico leased from the Taylor family in the late 1950s. This marks a full circle moment as "the old store building," called The Reynolds Store, does now hold "appropriate permanent exhibits" operated by the Museum of New Mexico. The Taylor-Mesilla Historic Site is a long-gestating work in progress for both the Museum of New Mexico and the Taylor family. The rest of the site will open in fall 2025.

With this 2003 donation, New Mexico Historic Sites now has a place which will showcase the history of New Mexico from a perspective not told elsewhere in the Museum of New Mexico system by bringing to the forefront the community of Mesilla, the Mesilla Valley, and southern New Mexico.

Mesilla, New Mexico

La Mesilla – or simply, Mesilla –, though relatively young compared to other New Mexican communities such as Taos, Santa Fe, and Albuquerque, has witnessed some of New Mexico's most significant 19th-century moments. The Taylor-Mesilla Historic Site is a prime location for highlighting just how important southern New Mexico has been to the history of New Mexico as a whole. The site can help reframe some perspectives regarding New Mexico's "most important" history, placing southern New Mexico squarely in that conversation. Furthermore, its testimony and witness to the U.S. War with Mexico and

The Taylor-Mesilla Historic Site. Photo by Alexandra McKinney, Department of Cultural Affairs.

the immigration patterns that followed provides a remarkable ability – as well as one of the only places – to understand the historical context of immigration and borderland relations today, particularly in its nearly unchanged Mexican plaza.

Mesilla was founded in 1848, shortly after the end of the U.S. War with Mexico when a large swath of the northern Mexican frontier was ceded to the United States. The war ended with the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo.

One concession of the Treaty allowed Mexican citizens who suddenly found themselves in American territory the freedom to return and repatriate to Mexico. Father Ramón Ortiz, priest at the church in Paso del Norte (present day Juarez), "received the appointment as Commissioner General of Emigration" to oversee the process of resettlement from New Mexico into Mexico "and issue land grants."[2] Ortiz helped people from communities like El Paso, San Elizario, Ysleta, and Socorro re-settle in Mesilla.

Though Father Ortiz and the new Mesilla residents were very happy with the community and its placement on the Mexican side of the international border, the U.S. government wanted a strip of land, part of modern-day southern Arizona and New Mexico, as it was strategically necessary to completing a transcontinental railroad to California.

From 1848-1853, the United States and Mexico, though not officially at war, remained in a political stand-off. This left Mesilla in a geographical no-man's-land as the two nations argued over where exactly the international border should be located.

To broker an official, final treaty on the international border, the United States sent James Gadsden as emissary. Gadsden hinted that Mexico could sell the disputed land to the United States, an option that was particularly appealing to a debt-ridden President Santa Ana.

The two nations signed the Gadsden Purchase in Mexico City on December 20, 1853. Congress approved this $10 million purchase the following year and the southern portions of present-day Arizona and New Mexico officially became United States territory – rather unfortunate for the many Mesilla residents who had moved in an effort to avoid U.S. citizenship.

Throughout the 1850s, Mesilla was county seat for Doña Ana and the largest community between San Antonio, Texas and San Diego, California. This made Mesilla a key location on stagecoach trails that crossed southern New Mexico as the United States built up its overland postal routes. In 1857, the San Antonio-San Diego Mail Line became the earliest stagecoach company operating between Mississippi and California. A year later the route was incorporated into the Overland Mail Company's Southern Oxbow line. But the height of the mail lines in Mesilla ended as quickly as they began as to thwart Confederate movement westward, Congress halted all mail lines in the south, including Mesilla.

Political and religious differences within the region did not end with the cessation of the Civil War in 1865. An 1871 riot, which left at least 7 dead and more than 35 injured, resulted in a mass schism of the Mesilla Valley. Five hundred citizens of the Mesilla Valley fled back to Mexico.

By 1885 the county seat for Doña Ana was moved from Mesilla to Las Cruces after the railroad bypassed the community. As a result, Mesilla's commercial and political importance in the region began to decline. It could be argued, however, that this commercial and political decline ultimately helped Mesilla maintain its 19th century character and ensure the unchanged design of its plaza and the buildings surrounding it, including the Taylor-Mesilla Historic Site.

A Changing Family Home

The Taylor-Mesilla Historic Site includes three buildings: The Reynolds Store ("the old store building"), the Barela Store, and the Taylor Family Home. Since the 1850s, when the earliest parts of the historic site were built, several families called the site home, and their stories are critical to understanding the economic and social life of the region during the second half of the

19th century.

Anastacio Barela and his wife Rafaela moved into the northern part of what makes up the Taylor-Mesilla Historic Site in 1854, living in a home behind their successful storefront on the plaza. When the Confederate Army fled New Mexico in 1863, Anastacio followed, leaving the home and store to Rafaela who stayed in Mesilla for the next four decades.[3]

The same year Anastacio Barela fled New Mexico, Joseph Reynolds and James Edgar Griggs expanded their growing mercantile empire into Mesilla. They opened a branch of the Reynolds and Griggs Company to the south of the Barela Store in what is today the Reynolds Store and Bowlin's Mesilla Book Center. Their partnership dissolved in early 1877 for unspecified reasons[4] so for the next two decades the Griggs Family leased the storefront to various proprietors.

By 1904, Joseph Reynolds' son Charles purchased the Griggs building as well as Rafaela Barela's property, combining the two storefronts and homes behind with the intent to recreate the mercantile empire of his father. He renovated the property to suit his needs, changing both the façades of the storefronts as well as the interior of the home. It is because of him that the Taylor-Mesilla Historic Site looks as it does today with its decorated metal façade stamped to mimic rough cut stone set atop the adobe building.

These renovations, along with a few bad years of business, forced Reynolds to take out a promissory note and mortgage deed from San Albino's parish priest Father Juan Grange. He was unable to pay back these loans and in 1913 he filed for bankruptcy, so Father Grange foreclosed on the property.

Father Grange moved into the home and lived there until his death in 1936. He left the home and storefronts in his will to his housekeeper Perla Alidib. She was a refugee of the Mexican Revolution who moved to Mesilla with her mother Valentina in 1911. Father Grange took the two in and Valentina – then later Perla – became his housekeeper.

Sometime in the 1920s Perla married Jacinto

The Dining Room at the Taylor-Mesilla Historic Site. Photo courtesy of Tom Connelly.

Alidib, but by the next decade he no longer lived with her. To supplement her income, she converted much of the home into five leased apartments.

For over a decade she rented out these apartments and ran the storefront. After an attack in her home, she called J. Paul Taylor and his wife Mary and offered to sell the home to the young family, and they decided to take her up on the offer. She did not sell all the property to the Taylors at one time. Instead, she sold the property in four pieces, the first on February 14, 1953. Three of these property purchases now constitute the Taylor-Mesilla Historic Site.

After selling, she continued to live nearby in a house she built on the plaza to the north of the Taylors' new family home. Perla's home is now incorporated into some of the storefronts located on the northwest corner of the plaza, not part of the historic site.

J. Paul & Mary Daniels Taylor

John Paul Taylor was born on his family's ranch in Chamberino, New Mexico on August 24, 1920, to William Robert Taylor and Maria Margarita Romero. Chamberino is a small, unincorporated community about 8 miles from the border with Texas and 22 miles from the border with Mexico.

Through his mother, Paul could trace his ancestry to Juan de Baca, a soldier who entered New Mexico with Coronado's 1540 expedition as well as Bartolomé Romero and Lucia Lopez Robledo, two of the original colonists who came to New Mexico in Don Juan de Oñate's 1598 entrada.

He was the youngest of six children – considerably younger than his next closest sibling in age – and was adored by his family. Taylor's parents were, by nature, community helpers and their values were instilled in him at a young age, helping

The Sala Grande at the Taylor-Mesilla Historic Site. Photo courtesy of Tom Connelly.

to define his adult life.[5]

He attended Valley High School (now called Gadsden High School), graduating in 1938. He frequently won contests at the school for accuracy in typing and was part of the drama club, marching band, and newspaper.

As part of his journalism classes, he met then-First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt in El Paso. He said of the experience, "We were so nervous. We wanted to make sure we had the poise to present our questions to the nation's First Lady, so we practiced and practiced all the way to El Paso."[6] He shook her hand and posed with her and the rest of his class.

Following high school, he attended the New Mexico College of Agriculture and Mechanical Arts (now New Mexico State University) receiving a BA in History. It was while in college that he first met Mary Helen Daniels. He recalled seeing her in his biography by Ana Pacheco:

"Mary always sat toward the front of the church with her mother, and my mother and I sat a few pews behind. It was back in the days when women still wore hats to church, and Mary's curly black-raven hair flowed from her hat—it was stunning. As I sat through Mass, I was in awe of her beauty".[7]

Mary Daniels Taylor was the only child of Albert Milton Daniels and Mary Helen "Mamie" Hempel, born in El Paso, Texas on July 8, 1922. Her mother had also grown up in El Paso while her father first came to Texas in 1917 with one of the units under the command of General John J. Pershing in response to Pancho Villa's invasion of New Mexico. By the time of Mary's birth, he was the foreman at the cement plant in what was then called La Esmelda, on the westside of El Paso along the southern border with Juarez, now called La Calavera Historical Neighborhood.

Paul and Mary did not formally meet until New Year's Day 1941 when their mothers introduced them at the Sun Carnival Parade in El Paso. Mary Helen Ratje, one of their daughters, stated, "Dad caught the eye of this beautiful woman, they visited a little, and from then on that was history."[8] The two courted for the next four years, marrying in 1945 at the Plaza Hotel in El Paso before he was stationed in New Orleans as an enlisted yeoman in the Navy.

They spent the first year of married life in Louisiana before moving back to New Mexico and making a home in Las Cruces across the street from the university. It was in this home that they welcomed the first of seven children, Robert, in 1947. The same year they learned of a home for sale in the nearby community of Mesilla.

Their first Mesilla home, on Calle de Parian, had no indoor plumbing or electricity. For the next several years they worked to renovate the home while Paul worked as a registrar for New Mexico State University, and Mary immersed herself in the community. The couple welcomed two more children while in this home.

Upon moving to Mesilla, the Taylors received questions and raised eyebrows for choosing to live in the predominantly Hispanic community, with someone even telling them, "Just think of what kind of culture your children will be brought up in." To which Paul responded, "You seem to have forgotten that this is *my* culture."[9] Their love for Mesilla began before they even arrived in town. They actively raised their children in the multicultural community, like what they had both been raised in, and of which he descended.

A Decision to Donate

Throughout the 70 years that the Taylor family lived in their home on the plaza, Paul and Mary remained steadfast in their dedication to pursuing historical knowledge and educating the community about the history of Mesilla, the Mesilla Valley, and southern New Mexico.

They both taught history classes at New Mexico State University. Paul served as part of the Board of Regents for the Museum of New Mexico before being elected to the State House of Representatives in 1986. During his tenure in the legislature, he carried the bill which elevated the Office of Cultural Affairs to a Cabinet-level

Wall feature identifying each building that makes up the historic site, part of the exhibit "Mesilla: A Place of Growth and Change" at the Taylor-Mesilla Historic Site. Photo by Alexandra McKinney, Department of Cultural Affairs.

department and introduced several bills over the years seeking funding appropriation for the Durango Microfilm Project.

This project, one which Mary was heavily involved in, conserved tens of thousands of primary documents from the Archivos Historicos del Arzobispado de Durango (Historical Archive of the Archbishopric of Durango) dating to the Spanish Colonial and Mexican national periods. These documents are now housed at the NMSU Archives and Special Collections as the Mary Daniels Taylor Durango Microfilm Collection. Dennis Daily, Archives and Special Collections Department Head at NMSU, stated regarding Mary's work on the history of the Mesilla Valley, "[She] paved the way for NMSU to gain access to the [Archivos Historicos de Arzobispado de Durango] for microfilming…After 15 years of work, the project resulted in the production of more than 1,200 reels of microfilm of various colonial archives in Durango." These microfilms are regularly consulted by researchers to NMSU.[10]

Paul and Mary also began showing their historic home – long before it was even fully renovated – as part of an early historic preservation group in Mesilla. Over the years, they never turned away curious visitors. Some tours even occurred after their children had gone to bed for the night. Mary Helen recalled in 2004 that, "You would go to bed at night…and Dad would decide to bring a group through. You would pull the covers over your head and think, 'Oh my gosh, he's not going to bring them in here!' Sure enough, he'd say, 'She's asleep. It's not going to be a big deal.'" The children would counterplay this action at times. Mary Helen continued, "One way of entertaining ourselves was getting underneath a bed…[we] would watch the human legs come through, and every once in a while, we would reach out and grab one and get in trouble."[11]

It was not just the home and its history that attracted visitors during these years, it was also the collection that the two had amassed. As a young child, Paul had been gifted two Maricopa pots from his aunt who was a teacher in Arizona. The two pieces of pottery set off a lifelong interest in Southwestern art and in artifacts that showcased the history of the region. Throughout their marriage Paul and Mary turned their home into an expansive art gallery, a testament to their love of New Mexico and its artists.

By 2002, the Taylors began discussing as a family what should happen to the home and collection after Paul and Mary's passing. They knew they wanted the home and the collection to stay together but also recognized the significant ef-

fort it would be to maintain both the preservation of the home and the objects inside. Additionally, Paul and Mary were very clear that they wanted the home to remain "as it is" and "open for tours by charities and school groups" regardless of whether it remained with the family or was donated to an outside entity.[12]

After numerous conversations as a family, the Taylors made an offer to the Museum of New Mexico and its State Monuments Division with two main conditions. The first was that Paul and Mary could reserve a life tenancy in the home and only after their deaths would the home open and operate to the public as a state monument. The second stipulated that the designation as a state monument would occur prior to their passing and upon donation to the state.

Before the home could be accepted by the Museum of New Mexico, it had to be evaluated to determine whether it was even eligible for status as a state monument. The home was already listed on the New Mexico State Register of Cultural Properties and the National Register of Historic Places. It was also listed as a significant structure in the National Register of Historic Places' nomination for the La Mesilla Historic District and was a contributing structure on the National Register of Historic Places' nomination for the Mesilla Plaza.

Despite already checking off these obstacles in its journey toward state monument designation, the Museum of New Mexico still needed to ensure the home met three key criteria as outlined by the Secretary of the Interior and the National Historic Preservation Act: historic significance, suitability, and feasibility.

Historic Significance

The Barela-Reynolds Property, a reference to two of the key families to occupy the home in its lifetime, met the historical significance criteria as it represents a period of history that, offers a significant opportunity for interpreting the history of not only La Mesilla but also of the Southwest and New Mexico during the late 19th century period. The property has the most potential for becoming an educational laboratory for the study of those elements of history most important to the United States that affected the Southwest and New Mexico. These began with the Spanish exploration and the settlement of [El Camino Real de] Tierra Adentro, the U.S./Mexican War and the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, the Gadsden Purchase, the Civil War, the establishment of transportation and trade routes in all directions, and equally important, life as lived during those early periods.[13]

Suitability

To meet the criteria of suitability, the property needed to show that it highlights a cultural theme not represented by the Museum of New Mexico or any other public agency in the state. Through the visits to the site in 2002 analyzing the collection as well as the historical significance of Mesilla, this criterion was met.

Feasibility

This criterion means that the property must be a setting where resources can be continuously devoted to protecting the site and its collection and that it must be a location the public can reasonably access. Because of its location on the Mesilla Plaza and the size of the home, the Museum of New Mexico determined this was feasible for use as a state monument.

On November 21, 2002, the Museum of New Mexico announced that "the Board of Regents of the Museum of New Mexico unanimously approved Representative J. Paul Taylor (D-Doña Ana) and Mary Taylor's bequest of the Barela/ Reynolds Historic Property on the plaza in Mesilla, N.M."[14] An official designation by the state legislature followed shortly after.

On September 20, 2003, a formal donation agreement was executed outlining the gift between the Taylor family and the Museum of New Mexico. On February 6, 2004, Governor Bill Richardson declared the home the Taylor-Barela-Reynolds-Mesilla State Monument. Finally, on September 14, 2006, the 9,000 square foot property was officially dedicated as a state monument.

The Taylor-Mesilla Historic Site

Since the site's official designation in 2004, the State of New Mexico's Department of Cultural Affairs, which the Museum of New Mexico is a division of, has worked in tandem with the Taylor family preparing the home to one day be open to the public. Much of the work has included hiring staff to lead operations, developing tours and school programs, and inventorying the collection of art and artifacts that will soon be part of the Museum of New Mexico. Following the passing of J. Paul Taylor on February 12, 2023, the Taylor family formally signed over the Taylor Family Home, the Reynolds Store, and the Barela Store to the State of New Mexico.

Right now, the Department of Cultural Affairs and New Mexico Historic Sites is working in four areas to turn a beloved family home into a beloved state historic site, ensuring the preservation of the adobe home, storefronts, and collection inside for generations to come. These areas include facilities, collections, operations, and interpretation.

Before opening the Taylor-Mesilla Historic Site, the Department of Cultural Affairs must make modifications to a building that is shifting from a private residence to a public space. As such there are life and safety requirements that must meet compliance before the home can open to the public. All these projects are done with the approval of New Mexico's Historic Preservation Division to ensure the historic fabric of the home remains intact.

Some of the life and safety requirements include installing emergency lights and exit signs, and upgrading property-wide systems including electrical, security and burglar detection, and fire detection. Since its donation, the home has had both fire and security detection systems, but additions and upgrades will include CCTV cameras throughout the home as well as increased Wi-Fi.

Another life and safety change that has been made in the home is that exterior doors of the house, which used to open by pushing into the home, have been flipped so that they pull toward the building exterior upon opening. It is a requirement in case of emergency that certain exterior doors open to the outside rather than posing a barrier to exiting safely by opening inside the building.

Some facility work that has taken place on the home in 2024 include preservation projects on the windows and doors of all three buildings to the site. The windows were cleaned, old paint and rotting wood removed, and new coats of paint were added to the doors and door frames as well as the façade of the Reynolds Store. These actions help ensure a stable, protective barrier on the building keeping water and dust from penetrating as well as slowing the rate of damage that the sun can have on the wood.

A significant upgrade that the Taylor Family Home received between 2020 and 2024 is a brand-new HVAC system. This project was vital to ensuring the preservation of the Taylor Family Collection for generations to come. This collection contains art and artifacts made from a variety of mediums including glass, oil paintings, wood, tin, paper, and clay. Each of these objects – from the most to the least delicate – must be cared for equally and the upgraded HVAC system allows for humidity and temperature control. Museum objects require a very regulated environment otherwise paint can peel and wood can expand and contract with fluctuating temperatures.

The Taylor Family Collection is extensive and in order for it to formally become part of the Museum of New Mexico, each object must be inventoried and numbered as well as examined with a detailed condition report.

It is important to note that New Mexico Historic Sites is not a collecting division. None of what is on display at any of the historic sites in the state are managed by those sites. Each historic site has a partner museum within the Museum of New Mexico system that manages and cares for the collections housed at each site.

For the Taylor-Mesilla Historic Site, the Taylor Family Collection is managed by the Museum

of International Folk Art in Santa Fe. That said, this collection will remain in Mesilla and on display at the home, cared for day-to-day by Taylor-Mesilla's museum technician and conservator who is responsible for completing the inventory and creating condition reports for each object.

The museum technician and conservator is also working to develop relevant operational protocols for the collection, particularly integrated pest management procedures and a housekeeping and cleaning plan. These protocols include regular monitoring of the home and stores for insects and pests, pest control maintenance scheduling, as well as enforcing safe environmental controls within the home.

Preparations on the historic site.. Photo by Alexandra McKinney, Department of Cultural Affairs.

One of the most important processes to protecting the home and the collection is not only regular monitoring of the temperature and humidity in the space but also keeping an eye out for any type of pest or insect and, as the home includes beautiful wood ceilings and doorways, monitoring for any signs of termites.

Protocols like integrated pest management are key to preparing the Taylor-Mesilla Historic Site for long-term operations. It is critical to develop procedures for how the site will operate day-to-day so as time goes on and staff rotates, these changes do not affect New Mexico Historic Sites' ability to welcome visitors and share the history of Mesilla, the Mesilla Valley, and southern New Mexico, seeing through the vision that Paul, Mary, and their family had for the site.

To welcome those visitors to the site, one critical piece of operations was the addition of new staff at the site. In 2024, the Taylor-Mesilla Historic Site doubled its staff with the addition of two interpretive rangers and a customer service representative. It is through the approval of an increased operations budget from the state legislature that New Mexico Historic Sites was able to bring three new team members on board.

Additional operational procedures in process as the site prepares for its grand opening include setting up admissions budgets and petty cash, developing emergency action plans, and developing the interpretive plan for the site going forward.

The first portion of the historic site, the Reynolds Store, officially opened to the public on August 24, 2024. This space, named in honor of Joseph and Charles Reynolds and the mercantile that operated from this building for years, is the visitor center/welcome space to the Taylor-Mesilla Historic Site. This is where visitors can purchase tickets to see the Taylor Family Home and rotating exhibits on the history of southern New Mexico.

Part of the interpretive plan for the Taylor-Mesilla Historic Site is a key directive from the

Taylor family as part of their donation: Placing Mesilla and its residents at the center of the historic site and allowing Mesilla to share its own story.

In Summer 2024, a graduate intern from NMSU conducted two dozen interviews with Mesilleros, both long-time residents and new residents, as well as those who may not live in the town but have unique connections with the town or who grew up in the Mesilla Valley. These recordings will become part of the interpretation at the Taylor-Mesilla Historic Site as part of a database of Mesilla stories that can be accessed, not just by site staff and researchers, but also by visitors to the site interested in digging deeper into the history of Mesilla and the Mesilla Valley.

The Taylor-Mesilla Historic Site is slated to have its grand opening fall 2025. Since its donation in 2003 the Taylor family has stated that their wish is to present the home to the public, to the extent possible, as a lived-in home. In 2006, Paul Taylor said the donation "is a tribute to the lasting feelings that we Taylors have to the people of the Mesilla community."[15] This is a wish that the staff at the Taylor-Mesilla Historic Site and the Department of Cultural Affairs take very seriously. In a way, from 1953 to 2023, the State of New Mexico and the Taylor family have travelled parallel paths, sometimes aligned and sometimes separately, to tell the story of the Mesilla Valley and southern New Mexico – a story that is not highlighted in any other way in the state. This path culminates with the Taylor-Mesilla Historic Site.

The Reynolds Store during Taylor-Mesilla Historic Site Family Day, August 2024. Photo by Monika Neuland Thomas, Department of Cultural Affairs.

New Mexico has a long, complex, and fascinating history. The addition of the Taylor-Mesilla Historic Site adds a layer to the story of New Mexico that can sometimes be forgotten among the most recognizable of tales like the Pueblo Revolt, Billy the Kid, and the Manhattan Project. It provides a unique opportunity to shift the perspective from north-south to south-north.

Through the generous donation of their family home, the Taylors have provided a new lens for which to showcase the history of New Mexico and New Mexico Historic Sites is working diligently to see through that vision. New Mexico Historic Sites is thrilled to be able to soon share with the public a family home that will promote a better understanding and appreciation of the history, culture, and architecture of New Mexico and provide a magical experience to New Mexicans for generations to come.

Alexandra McKinney is the Instructional Coordinator Supervisor of the Taylor-Mesilla Historic Site. She has degrees in education and public history. She is a sixth generation born and raised New Mexican and has been with the Taylor-Mesilla Historic Site since 2018.

End Notes

1. Letter to Florence Martin, Secretary to the President, New Mexico State University from Reginald Fisher, April 23, 1959.

2. William S. Kiser, *Turmoil on the Rio Grande: The Territorial History of the Mesilla Valley, 1846-1865* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2011), 39; José Angel Hernández, *Mexican American Colonization During the Nineteenth Century: A History of the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 104.

3. David W. Mercer, "The Barela Family and the Taylor-Barela-Reynolds Monument," (graduate paper, New Mexico State University, 2012), 8.

4. "Southern New Mexico," Las Vegas Gazette, March 31, 1877, accessed on Ancestry.com; Michael Ryan, email message to author, January 5, 2023.

5. Ana Pacheco, J. Paul Taylor: The Man from Mesilla (Santa Fe: Museum of New Mexico Press, 2012), 38-39.

6. Ana Pacheco, *J. Paul Taylor: The Man from Mesilla* (Santa Fe: Museum of New Mexico Press, 2012), 37.

7. Ana Pacheco, *J. Paul Taylor: The Man from Mesilla* (Santa Fe: Museum of New Mexico Press, 2012), 46.

8. Mary Helen Taylor Ratje, interview by the Friends of the Taylor Family Monument, *J. Paul Taylor Centennial Celebration*, August 2020.

9. Ana Pacheco, J. Paul Taylor: The Man from Mesilla (Santa Fe: Museum of New Mexico Press, 2012), 53.

10. Dennis Daily, email message to author, February 20, 2023.

11. Mary Helen Taylor Ratje, interview by Jon Hunner for New Mexico State Monuments, Mesilla, New Mexico, March 30, 2005.

12. "A Jewel from the Past" by Gary Pagett. Mesilla Valley Magazine. April/May 1984. P.30

13. Museum of New Mexico Office of Cultural Affairs, *Assessment of the Barela-Reynolds House for State Monument Status*, (Santa Fe: Museum of New Mexico, 2002), 10.

14. Press Release. "Historic Mesilla Property Bequeathed to Museum," *Museum of New* Mexico, November 21, 2002.

15. Todd G. Dickson. "A Home for the people," *The Las Cruces Bulletin*, September 8, 2006, p. A17.

Return To
Table Of Contents

The Ballard Photo Studio: A Portrait of Community

An exhibit of James Ballard photos ran for several months at the Las Cruces Branigan Cultural Center. It was curated by Elizabeth Villa and Dennis Daily of the NMSU Library, Archives and Special Collections. NMSU student Matthias Borg digitally photographed more than 750 of Ballard's original 5x7-inch negatives. This is a sampling of the exhibit's images. Additional photos on the back cover.

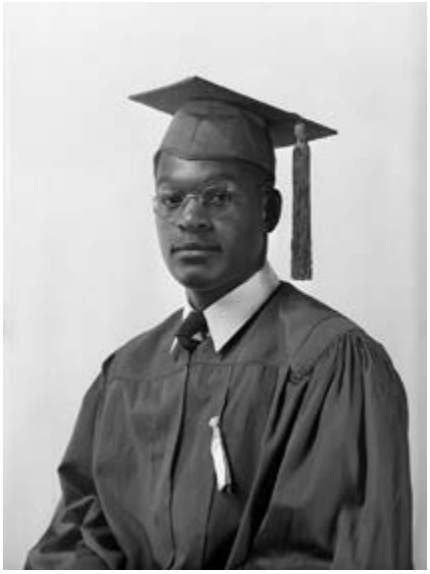
Between 1929 and 1951, Jim Ballard created striking photographic portraits of more than 5,000 Mesilla Valley residents at his studio on south Main Street in Las Cruces. More than 25,000 black and white, 5x7-inch film negatives produced from these portrait sessions are now held in the New Mexico State University Library's Archives and Special Collections. Together, these individual photographs of our town's ancestors form a portrait of the Las Cruces-area community from the middle decades of the 20th century. Bringing their faces back into the light is an attempt to ensure their lives and contributions are not forgotten.

James and Martha Ann Ballard opened Ballard's Studio, at 119 S. Main Street in 1929. The building that housed the studio still stands today. Originally from Kentucky, the Ballards came west in an attempt to overcome Jim Ballard's tuberculosis diagnosis. The Las Cruces climate proved beneficial and Ballard had a long career here as a photographer, farmer, and breeder of champion Hereford cattle.

The couple worked together to run the studio, a film processing lab, and a photography supply store for 33 years, making portraits of thousands of Mesilla Valley residents. They also photographed area businesses, events, and students at the New Mexico College of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts (now NMSU). The Ballards retired in 1963 and their business eventually was taken over by the father and son team of Enrique and Victor Berroteran, who operated the studio under the name Ballard's Photo Shop until the late 1990s.

Caption information was taken from the negative envelopes. In some cases, names and/or dates are missing. If you know someone not identified in these photos, contact the NMSU Library Archives.

Ciro Baca, undated



E.C. Brooks, 1942

Rosa Alvillar Bertoldo, Sep.1930

Della Wareing, undated

Bowman, Sept. 15, 1932

Carpenter, Dec. 1931

Jesus Nevarez, Oct. 10, 1940

Dirk E. Seligman, Dec. 7, ??

Harry Tashiro, Feb. 2, 1942

Hattie Mae McCullum, 1941

Della Mae Zinn, July 20, 1946

Virginia Ascarate, May 1943

Santos Levario, Dec. 1929

Felipe Lucero, Feb. 21, 1936

Miguel "Mike" Apodaca, 1942

Ola Mae Davis, July 1942

Unknown

Ramon Aranda, Jr., June 1942

Victor Sarabia Telles, ca. 1942

Ramirez family, Nov. 1935

Josephine Lucero, undated

Carl Nakayama and Toshi Yabumoto wedding, Feb. 1, 1940

Celia Perry and Arthur Fountain wedding, 1930

Crecencio Bustillos, Dec. 1933

Eugene A. Baird, Feb. 3, 1939

Fannie Calderon Paz, 1930

Grace Brock, October 7, 1930

R. Brinkerhoff family, undated

Carlos Saiz, October 13, 1930

F. Cunningham, undated

The First New Mexico Mental Health Act: Its History, Development, and Passage

Signed into law by Governor Jerry Apodaca on April 7, 1977

By Joe B. Alexander

From Hawaii to New Mexico

When Dr. Myron Neal, Director of the New Mexico Department of Hospitals and Institutions, and I agreed that I would look at a job at the new Southwest Mental Health Center in Las Cruces, New Mexico, I thought it would be a major change. It was 1969, and I was working as a psychologist at Hawaii State Hospital in Kaneohe. I would be leaving a tropical state surrounded by water for an arid one surrounded by land. However, I soon found out there were more similarities than differences. Both states had rich histories and multi-ethno-cultural populations. Both states' economies were built on agriculture, tourism, and the military. Both were strong advocates of labor unions and voted Democratic in large numbers.

Jerry Apodaca.

Dr. Neal welcomed me at the airport in Albuquerque, drove me 220 miles south to Las Cruces, and turned me over to the board members that I would be working for. After cocktails at the historic Mesilla home of Paul and Rosalie Rader, we strolled to La Posta for traditional New Mexico cuisine. Then, we took our seats at the Pan American Center to watch the nationally ranked New Mexico State University basketball team defeat their long-time rival UTEP (University of Texas at El Paso). Before the evening was over, I was ready to sign on to be part of this community and its new mental health center with its commitment to serving all people, regardless of their resources.

Despite the warmth and excitement of the board and staff's welcome, the realities of joining a struggling new mental health center soon emerged. Just six years before, President John F. Kennedy had signed the first Community Mental Health Act into law, the last bill he signed before his death.[1] It became part of Kennedy's legacy that people would not have to be confined long-term in mental institutions if they could be treated effectively in their own communities. The new mental health movement was not to be just a federal effort, however. It required the states to partner in cost-sharing and to administer the program. As we would soon learn, in New Mexico, there were two impediments: 1) the difficulty in getting public funding in a relatively low-revenue state and 2) the anti-donation clause of the state constitution. Many people in southern New Mexico, including Governor Jerry Apodaca, would be keys to solving the problems we faced. Bringing the community mental health movement to our state was a pioneering effort.

Mental Health Services Slow to Develop in Parts of New Mexico

Even in the early 1960s, New Mexico residents had difficulty accessing most mental health services. Except for those living near Albuquerque or those relatively well-off financially, finding mental health care was difficult. There was one public mental health hospital in the state at

Las Vegas that frequently had a waiting list. The hospital's location in northeastern New Mexico was remote for most people. Many families did not have the money to take time from work to visit a loved one receiving inpatient treatment in a distant location. Patients thought to be ready for a trial visit back home might have to travel as far as 400 miles. There also were two residential treatment centers for juveniles, one for males and a second for females, often with an incarceration atmosphere. Few professionals were available to provide outpatient treatment throughout the state. Most people who sought services were treated at the Medical School of the University of New Mexico (UNM) in Albuquerque or, less often, at a mental health demonstration project at New Mexico State University (NMSU) in Las Cruces. Many state officials were concerned but had scarce resources to improve things.

A Perilous Start in Las Cruces

The New Mexico State University mental health demonstration project ended sometime before 1969. Dr. Myron W. Neal, Director of the New Mexico Department of Hospitals and Institutions (DHI) under Governor David Cargo, wanted to start a mental health center in the southern part of the state. Taking advantage of the relatively new federal community mental health program, New Mexico negotiated a 90/10 matching grant to start Southwest Mental Health Center, a publicly funded private, nonprofit organization in Las Cruces.

A $30,000 match for the large 90/10 federal grant needed to materialize. Southwest Mental Health Center (SWMHC) had little prospect of raising the money locally and needed state help. There was just one problem: the anti-donation clause of the New Mexico Constitution. Many in New Mexico had not heard of the provision. A few warned that the drafters of the New Mexico Constitution had included a clause that prohibited providing state monies to any recipient other than a facility or service directly accountable to the state. Monies could be appropriated to support the University of New Mexico Medical School. Monies could be appropriated to the New Mexico State Hospital. But, an appropriation could not be made to a non-government entity of any kind. For example, money could not be used to support groups like the Red Cross--or Southwest Mental Health Center.

The anti-donation clause was formidable but was solvable through an agreement with New Mexico State University, which committed to matching monies for the federal grant. But, unknown to officials and supporters at SWMHC, changes were underway at NMSU. The SWMHC board president at the time was Dr. Phillip Ambrose, Vice President of Student Affairs. Dr. Ambrose was shocked when he was informed that the university preferred to apply the previously committed monies to other university uses. His boss, the NMSU executive vice president, Dr. William O'Donnell, simply changed his mind and reneged on his commitment. When Dr. Ambrose learned of the sudden withdrawal of critical matching monies, he notified fellow board members and the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) liaison in Dallas, Alice Harmon, R.N.

Meanwhile, the new psychiatrist for SWMHC, Dr. William Shelton, had already been granted Memorial General Hospital privileges and oriented to his duties as a member of the psychiatry department. It was he who would admit patients to the hospital and be the attending physician. The SWMHC board was proud that it could bring a badly needed psychiatry service to Las Cruces. Up until then, psychiatric patients needing inpatient treatment had to be transferred across state lines to El Paso. If no beds were available, the person would be sent three hours north to a bed in Albuquerque. An inpatient bed in Las Cruces would have been good news for the patient, family, and friends.

The sudden withdrawal of the funding commitment from NMSU endangered the entire comprehensive mental health grant funding for Southwest Mental Health Center. With the help of Dr. Neal at the Department of Institutions, Band-

Aid solutions were found, and Southwest MHC limped along.

Problems Sustaining Mental Health Services in NM

Southwest Mental Health Center was not the only service disadvantaged by the anti-donation clause. After I arrived for my position at Southwest in 1970, my travels around the state acquainted me with the many mental health providers at work in various communities.

At that time, probably the most visible mental health workers in rural New Mexico were the dedicated community service coordinators employed by the New Mexico Department of Hospitals and Institutions. Covering a large region and constantly on call, each coordinator provided aftercare to patients returning from the State Hospital. In southern New Mexico, two workers exemplified the program. From Deming, Patty Israel served Luna, Hidalgo, Grant, and Sierra counties and was aptly nicknamed the state hospital "runner" by one of her patients.[2]

Marjorie Bunch, MSW, based in Roswell, worked with the county health department nurse, who dispensed medications to patients, including injections of anti-psychotic drugs such as Thorazine.[3] Ms. Bunch also made home visits and supervised weekly day treatment care staffed by a volunteer who organized games and crafts and offered snacks.

In 1971, concerned citizens in the Roswell area saw the need for more comprehensive, community-based services.[4] They helped establish the Chaves County Mental Health Center. Margie Trujillo, who had recently graduated with a Master's degree from Eastern New Mexico University, was offered the directorship. She launched the center on a budget of $17,000 and with a newly hired secretary. Dr. Walter Winslow, Chair of the Department of Psychiatry at UNM, developed an outreach program that helped supplement treatment. Monthly, he, and later psychiatry residents, offered services in places like Roswell.

Such were the pioneering efforts to offer mental health care across a large rural state. My visits with the new community-based mental health programs informed me of their frustrations getting paid for services they provided for New Mexico residents. Unfortunately, they were unable to receive reimbursement from the state due to the anti-donation clause in the New Mexico Constitution.

A few of our supporters knew of this legal problem, which had been addressed from many angles with no solution. Apparently, if you were an official state agency, you could receive financial support. If not, you went unreimbursed. Lawyers had been thwarted by the anti-donation clause of the New Mexico Constitution for years. Elected officials were sympathetic but unable to offer a legislative solution. It became evident to us that the best chance of obtaining improved services was to form a group to grapple with the problem. We knew our patients, their friends and families, and our state legislators. We needed to organize.

Creating the New Mexico Committee On Mental Health Services

Many mental health workers and leaders statewide had become acquainted with each other over the years of frustration trying to help their organizations become solvent. Once contacted by mail or in person, they were interested in working to establish better funding for services. They believed the anti-donation challenge could be solved with patience and intelligence. Following a consultation, we chose to draft a proposed state law to resolve our seemingly intractable problem.

Around 1975, we organized as the New Mexico Committee on Mental Health Services. We eventually concluded that a document would have to be created that addressed the anti-donation clause directly. Although there was no apparent solution, the team had faith that one would be found by working with our fellow employees, board members, and supporters throughout the state. We developed a concrete plan to keep our legislators involved and supportive.

The Committee on Mental Health Services built momentum. The plan going forward was to do the following:

1. Scour similar states' mental health legislation.
2. Draft a first New Mexico mental health bill.
3. Circulate the document among interested reviewers.
4. Have volunteers phone all Committee members for suggestions and critique.
5. Meet in person as a whole Committee to negotiate language and modifications.
6. Create a new version of the proposed bill with the latest changes.
7. Have volunteers review with all the Committee to get the most recent suggestions.
8. Meet again with the Committee in person to improve the current version.
9. Repeat the process.

The first step was critical. To draft a proposed New Mexico mental health law, we wanted to benefit from other states' experiences. I contacted Jonas Morris, a Washington-based legislative analyst and consultant. He directed us to the laws of states similar to New Mexico in size, budget, and governmental structure. Two Southwest Mental Health Center employees, Carl Brown, an NMSU Ph.D. candidate, and Judy Messal, combed through the laws and made suggestions for a New Mexico act. We sent the relevant information to the members of the Committee on Mental Health Services.

This statewide Committee met once a month to critique the developing document, alter its wording, and plan next steps in creating a first mental health act for New Mexico. Every month, we reminded ourselves that the proposed law would never be perfect; it only had to be good enough for all to support and promote to their legislators.

Some legislators were more interested in mental health promotion than others. Some had more influence to enable passage of a bill to become law. Senator Aubrey Dunn, Sr. Chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, and Representative John Mershon, Chairman of the House Appropriations Committee, became increasingly supportive. Both these powerful chairs were from Otero County, and one of our Committee members, Vi Phillips, director of Alamogordo's Zia School for Handicapped Children, was their constituent.

Every year, the Joint Finance Committee switched chairmanship from the House Appropriations Committee to the Senate Finance Committee. This year, it would be in the hands of the Senate Finance Committee. This meant that House Bill 300, the final budget bill of the entire session, was, at that time, always controlled by a legislator from Otero County. And both legislators listened to their friend Vi Phillips.

John Mershon from the NM Bluebook 1979. NM public document.

We needed three other elements: a sponsor for the bill, advice on how to pass it, and a governor willing to sign it. As for the sponsorship, admired Albuquerque Representative Lenton Malry, the first African American to serve in the New Mexico Legislature, wanted to carry the mental health bill. To promote the bill's signing, I spoke about our plans with Las Cruces State Senator Jerry Apodaca, soon to be running for governor.

As for passing the bill, we approached another state senator well-known to us. Senator Gladys Hansen of Dona Ana County offered her wise perspective on getting broad systemic legislation through. Senator Hansen explained how she would introduce a bill in one session with low expectations of passage. The first time she dropped the bill in the hopper, it was primarily to get the legislators and others to understand the need she was addressing and her general approach. In that session, she identified her allies and opponents. She found a strong sponsor in the House. She knew which committees would give her friendly hearings and which would not. In the process, she

discovered where her bill needed more development. Between sessions, she improved her legislation, modifying the wording and emphasizing the support that had already emerged. The second time she introduced the bill, she wanted it to pass, even with warts and all. If the resulting law was not perfect at that point, at least it was on the books and could be cleaned up in a third session.

Even with increasing community and legislator support and the sympathetic ear of a gubernatorial candidate, it was clear from Senator Hansen's advice that much work still needed to be done.

Getting the NM Bill Language Right

As the Committee on Mental Health Services proceeded, we built the proposed first New Mexico Mental Health Act on the elements of the 1963 federal mental health law: inpatient and outpatient treatment, partial hospitalization, and consultation and education services. It also required compliance with civil rights, transportation, and housing laws. The proposed state law established that funding and other support could come from federal, state, and local governments, as well as generous participation by private non-profits and the business community.

It was vital that the language creating the mental health law have the correct authorizing language and meet the requirements of the "anti-donation" clause. The bill sponsor had to be able to work with legislators of both parties and both chambers of the Legislature. We all alerted each other to trigger words or ideas that would be objectionable to key legislators, especially Senator Aubry Dunn, Sr., and Representative John Mershon.

Constituents with a broad range of interests had to go out of their way to contact friends, opponents, legislators, and influential leaders in the community to promote, or at least not oppose, the language of the final bill. For example, Margie Trujillo*, who had left Chaves County Mental Health Center by then to pursue doctoral studies at UNM*, helped enormously. She worked with representatives Benny Altamirano of Luna County and Rey Medina of Rio Arriba and Taos counties. She also contacted Senator C. B. Trujillo of Taos, San Miguel, and Mora counties. Susie Truby, a program director at Eastern New Mexico University, built support for the legislation in her institution. In Las Cruces, Fran Walker, Ph.D. of Southwest Mental Health Center, did similar work.

Support from Albuquerque was critical due to the large number of legislators from Bernalillo County. Walter Winslow, M.D., of UNM; Sue Crewe, R.N. Associate Administrator at Bernalillo County Mental Health Center, and Robert Blachly, MSW, also of the Center, did their part to generate support around the state. We deeply appreciated their help. The funding of their organizations was secure. They would have little direct benefit from the proposed bill, but they cared about service availability in other communities.

As Senator Gladys Hansen advised, we assessed legislators' inclinations and past actions to win their support or at least minimize their opposition. All supporters would be needed to construct the best approach to the legal formulation of the groundbreaking law.

Volunteers Critical to Passing the Law

Two volunteers found inspiration in helping an idea become law. One was Mary Mittenzwei. Along with a colleague, she came to Southwest Mental Health Center twice a week to help with a proposed law that would raise the level of services for both adults and children without regard to finances or proximity to large cities. The volunteers were encouraged by the effort to reduce the severe discrepancy in the services that could be offered by Bernalillo County Mental Health Center, a county-supported provider affiliated with a medical school in a largely urban area, and by Southwest Mental Health Center (SWMHC), a private nonprofit provider, 220 miles to the south and responsible for 33,000 square miles of rural New Mexico.

Ms. Mittenzwei and her colleague provided the New Mexico Committee on Mental Health

Services a way to have frequent contact over the ensuing months. From their workstation at Southwest MHC, the volunteers set out to build a communication network. This was a time before cell phones and personal computers and their ability to connect people instantaneously. Instead, it was human voices through hardwired phones across a huge state that was critical. Two days a week, the volunteers called a growing list of supporters and legislators on our contact list. They presented the latest thinking about the content of the proposed legislation and the best way for the budding statewide organization to proceed. The personable volunteers were critical in establishing trust with mental health workers across the miles. The most recent wording of the legislation was reviewed, and the volunteers elicited comment and critique.

The communication network allowed everyone to keep up to date so that monthly in-person Committee meetings, usually in Albuquerque, kept the process moving and built loyalty and friendship among the members. Each reported on their contact with local citizens for support and began to contact legislators and all interested citizens. This included parents, educators, and those in related organizations. Without the intelligent and faithful services of Mary Mittenzwei and her colleague, we could not have been so effective.

Tracking the NM Legislative Process

When the Legislature convened in January of 1977, the New Mexico Committee on Mental Health Services was ready. During the 1960s and '70s, each chamber of the New Mexico Legislature operated separately on most issues, except budget matters. In 1977, the budget was in the hands of two powerful committee chairs from Otero County. John Mershon in House Appropriations Committee and Aubrey Dunn, Sr., of Senate Finance. Each year, as the Legislature began to draw closer to adjournment, the House and Senate would begin to work more closely together and eventually produce a single budget bill, HB300, to send to the governor for his decision. The final budget bill would be the product of hard work in the last few days in Santa Fe.

Then, as now, the New Mexico Legislature met yearly, for sixty days one year and thirty days in the alternate year. The short session was devoted to budget development matters and to emergency items. For example, one year, during a short session, the Legislature had to take the time to address turmoil at the State Prison in Santa Fe. Almost all substantive issues, however, were debated and developed in the 60-day session. The Mental Health Act was sure to be developed during the 60-day session. We did not assume the bill would succeed the first time it was introduced. That would allow us two years to work through difficult issues and get organized for the next 60-day session.

We had familiarized ourselves with the details of both legislative chambers. We knew that Albuquerque elected almost half of the legislators, but that southern New Mexico held the chairs of both the House Appropriations Committee and the Senate Finance Committee. Although the chairmanships were extremely important in both chambers, the most powerful positions by far were Speaker of the House in that body and President Pro-tem in the Senate. Walter K. Martinez (D), a prominent Valencia County lawyer, had been elected Speaker for many years. Speaker Martinez had almost unlimited ability to determine which legislation passed and which did not. He determined which House members got appointed to which committees and who the chairs of the committees would be. He also assigned proposed bills to one or more committees that would hold hearings and pass the bills out favorably or not.

The process of bill assignment had a certain drama to it. Speaker Martinez sat in his chair in the center of a row of elevated seats facing his fellow representatives. The Chief Clerk would call out the bill number and topic. The speaker then would call out the committees to which the bill would be referred. If he liked the bill, he would announce only one or two committees. If he did not favor the bill, he could send it on a long journey through many committees. He could

also defer a bill. The bill would be acted upon in committee and reported back to the Speaker or be passed along to the next committee. Most bills had financial implications and were almost sure to be referred to the House Appropriations Committee or tabled for no further action. Much maneuvering took place in the speaker's nearby office to win his reconsideration or be tabled, to wait for the next year's session. Similar authority rested with the Senate's President Pro-tem Ike M. Smalley from Deming.

The New Mexico Committee on Mental Health Services tracked the progress of our bill in both chambers carefully. Throughout the session, committee members met, attending to all aspects of our process, consulting each other by phone or letter if that was important. The two SWMHC volunteers kept the network up to date.

Carl Brown and I also traveled to Santa Fe to meet with the newly inaugurated governor, Jerry Apodaca. He agreed to look carefully at a Mental Health Act should we get it through the Legislature and to his desk. He was only the second Las Crucen elected to be elected governor. We counted his being in office a hometown advantage.

As we hoped, Representative Lenton Malry of Albuquerque sponsored our bill. Vi Phillips in Alamogordo continued to be devoted to passing the legislation. She had kept both Representative John Mershon and Senator Aubrey Dunn closely informed to increase their support.

When the final days before adjournment approached, the New Mexico Committee on Mental Health Services began frequent contact with legislators in their districts. We were not strangers to them and had taken their concerns into consideration, as we had those of other mental health service providers and local officials. Despite our diligence and interest in compromise, HB 472, the bill to authorize mental health services throughout the state, was still hung up in House Bill 300, the final finance bill of each session. Passage of HB 300 now rested in the hands of Otero County Senator Aubrey Dunn. We had worked hard with Senator Dunn throughout the bill's development. Based on her recent contact with Senator Dunn, Ms. Phillips assured us that the legislation would pass as part of the last bill on the last day.

Other legislative supporters of the bill tried to contact Senator Dunn. Others among his friends and colleagues called him, trying to get reassurance that the bill would be successful. None could reach him. In desperation, we called Ms. Phillips again. She agreed to try to contact him personally. Just as the legislative session ended, Vi Phillips told us that she finally had reached him. The bill would be included as part of the final appropriations package and be forwarded to the new governor for his decision.

Governor Apodaca Signs The Act

House Bill 472 passed the New Mexico Legislature on March 19, 1977.[4] We had gotten the bill through in the same year it was first introduced. It was signed into law by Governor Jerry Apodaca on April 7, 1977.[5] Governor Apodaca kept his word to carefully consider the first statewide mental health legislation, which permitted the funding of community-based services to providers

Governor Jerry Apodaca poses at his desk in the New Mexico state house. Public domain.

other than government sources. Members of the New Mexico Committee on Mental Health Services gathered once more--this in Las Crues time to celebrate.

Although many people contributed to passing New Mexico's first Mental Health Act, its success came down finally to the pen in the governor's hand. Jerry Apodaca was a remarkable public servant. The first governor of Hispanic heritage elected in New Mexico since 1918, he brought an unprecedented number of people of various ethnicities into his administration. He was a systems thinker, organizing the first gubernatorial cabinet system, implementing the statewide Community Mental Health Act, and bolstering New Mexico's public education from kindergarten to post-secondary institutions. His emphasis was on community access to services that build a better society. Former Governor Apodaca died on April 26, 2023, in Santa Fe.

Acknowledgment

Thanks go to Elena Perez-Lizano, MLS, New Mexico Archives Bureau Chief, who verified that Gov. Jerry Apodaca signed NM HB 472 on April 7, 1977. In an email to the author on October 13, 2023, Ms. Perez-Lizano noted that several documents are available to search for verification. The records are housed at the State Archives of New Mexico. She noted that further details about the legislation can be found in the Legislative Council Service Records, Chapters 1977, Box 6768. The Legislative Council Service papers identified the bill sponsors, text of the act and revision history.

Joe Alexander was born in Fort Worth, Texas, in 1936. Since getting a Ph.D. in psychology from Baylor University he has been a psychologist in the U.S., Germany, and Turkey. He was the Executive Director of Southwest Mental Health Center (SWMHC) in Las Cruces from 1972 until 1977, when they passed New Mexico's first mental health act. He left SWMHC to join a regional higher education consortium in Boulder, Colorado, The Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE). He was a Fulbright Professor of psychology and management at Ege University, in Izmir, Turkey, in 1982-83. He was later recruited to treat soldiers traumatized in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Vietnam. He retired as a civilian psychologist at Ft. Riley, Kansas, and returned to Albuquerque in 2020.

End Notes

1. DiGravio, Vic. "The Last Bill JFK Signed—And the Mental Health Work Still to Be Done." WBUR Local Coverage, October 23, 2013. https://www.wbur.org/news/2013/10/23/community-mental-health-kennedy.

2. "For Patty Israel, Service is a Goal," *Deming Headlight*, April 23, 1973. newspapers.com

3. Margie Trujillo. Personal correspondence to Joe B. Alexander, Ph.D., January 28, 2024.

4. Margie Trujillo, Personal correspondence to Joe B. Alexander, Ph.D., January 28, 2024.

5. Collection 1971-005; New Mexico Legislative Council Service records Laws of New Mexico, 1977, Chapter 279 (House Bill 472)
Box 6768. State Archives of New Mexico

6. Collection 1976-030; Governor Jerry Apodaca Papers Series II; Legislative Papers
Folder 210, House Bill Inventory Log, 1977
Box no. 4, Serial no. 7538. State Archives of New Mexico

Return To
Table Of Contents

The Death of Mary Alzada Waters

By Salvatore Patricolo

Ah, Halloween or to many in the Southwest, Día De Los Muertos, season! No matter your age or income, everyone loves the time of the year when the leaves turn brown (maybe not so much in the Southwest), the temperatures get cooler (thank you!), and the whole country prepares for all the ghosts and goblins who will be trick-or-treating for goodies and fun.

Adults go to parties, go to great lengths to out-do last years' costumes, and gather for grog bowls and scary-themed meals or meet at haunted houses.

There are also the office parties, pumpkin patches, pumpkin spice coffees and drinks, and the hay rides. Gourds of all types decorate all sorts of spaces and people's moods are happier and festive. Traditions from all parts of the country overlap and create one magical holiday season for all to enjoy.

One of the more unique aspects of the American celebration is the haunted house where people pay to get scared and listen to the ghost stories of the long dead who are believed to still inhabit and haunt various locales.

A quick Google search will allow you to find and read about many unexplained paranormal events in the United States and in particular our home of New Mexico.

Here in Las Cruces, we have quite a few ghost stories and mysterious deaths of those that are believed to still not be at rest. Many books and articles have been written on these urban legends.

One in particular that has fascinated me since my arrival in 2010 has been the story of a young woman named Mary Alzada Waters who, it is believed, still haunts the old County Court House/Jail on Amador Drive since her passing in 1951 after being so scared by something unseen that it caused her to scream in horror, then followed by an agonized and painful death etched upon her countenance as she passed. Wow! What a creepy tale!!

According to a number of people associated with the old County Court House/Jail (opened in 1937), including the folks at Southwest Expeditions - Haunted, Las Cruces, (who currently run an annual Halloween Haunted House show at the old facility), this historical occurrence has survived for 73+ years as a true urban Las Cruces legend.[1]

The ghostly sightings, clanging, and creaking of the facility - even including a reported video of Mary's (and others) ghostly apparitions - add to this urban legend of the mystery of the old facility. In order to understand this legend, I had to dive deeper into this mysterious woman.

Many articles over the years have been written about Mary Water's and her haunting of the old Court House/Jail. Even Las Cruces.com and the *Las Cruces Bulletin* have written articles over the years regarding the mystery of Mary Waters. One of them states:

> "On November 1, 1951 (Note: it was actually January 11,1951), a patrolman discovered a woman lying unconscious outside the Amador Hotel. Mary Waters, a waitress, was assumed drunk, so she was taken to the Doña Ana Courthouse jail, where she was left alone in a cell.
>
> According to legend, it was only moments later that jailers heard a scream. They hurried to the cell, only to find poor Mary dead, 'with a horrified look on her face'.
>
> The coroner declared the cause of death to be a ruptured kidney (Note: actually the liver).

Alcohol poisoning was also indicated. Whatever the reason, the story has drawn interest from paranormal groups across the country.

To this day, the courthouse jail is considered one of the more haunted places in Las Cruces. Jail doors have been known to open and close by themselves. Footsteps are often heard. Many witnesses have claimed to hear a woman screaming in the area. Blood has been found on the floor and the spirit of a former judge is often seen peering from an upstairs window.

What did Mary Waters see on that fateful night in 1951? Was she the victim of a circumstance? Does she now walk the hallways of the old jailhouse as the group from one of many lost souls bound to the historic courthouse? Your guess is as good as ours."[2]

As a novice historian and retired Special Agent/Investigator with Homeland Security, curiosity definitely got the better of me. Indeed, I do believe in ghostly spirits, paranormal activity, and the testimonies of people and groups as to what they've seen and heard.

I got to thinking to myself, who is this woman who haunts the Court House/Jail and why does she do it? What is her life story? How and why did she die in the facility? What did she see that made her scream and die in what has been described as a horrendous death? Where is she buried?

After a few years of research, interviews, and locating old records, I believe I have solved some of the mystery of Mary Waters. And though not an amazing story, it is indeed a sad one and one that needs to be told due to the times she lived in and the circumstances surrounding her death. Readers can discuss and debate them which would make the legend live on.

Therefore, for the record, here are some of the facts I've discovered through my research of Mary Waters' life and death and, as I have ascertained, there are still many more unanswered questions that I need to do further research on some that may never be found.

Mary was born to Elliot Romie Carter (or Rommie Elliott Carter (DOB: 1892) and Evelyn Lillian (Wells) Carter (DOB: 1899) in La Porte, Texas on February 5, 1919. Her father was listed as being a barber in the 1920 Federal Census and he was born in Missouri. Her mother was born in Texas. The census also says her father owned their own farm and she had an unknown number of siblings. Their home in 1920 is listed as being in East Columbia, Brazoria, Texas. She had a tenth grade education and her family were most likely lower middle class with all participating in the work around the farm.[3]

Mary's first marriage was to an Obie Kellar (Keller) Waters from Louisiana - 11 1/2 years her senior (DOB: June 17,1907). They were married on May 7,1939 in Green County, Texas when she was 20 years old. Per the 1940 census, Mary was living with her brother-in-law, Johnny Alexander (an automobile salesman), his wife, Margie, and their two children (Shirley and Carolyn), with her young daughter, Judith, at 1016 Bills Drive, Kilgore, Gregg County, Texas. The Census also suggests that Ms. Waters was not working in 1939 generating no income. How long she was married is unknown.[4]

Her second marriage was to a Roy Leon Brown, age 41 (DOB: 1904 - DOD: 1959?), in Avondale, AZ on May 13, 1945 when she was 26 years old. She reportedly had three children by this time. Her first child with Obie Waters was a daughter named Judith Evelyn Waters, April 18,1940.

At the time of Mary's death, she was already divorced from her second husband. Her movements between the years of her marriages seem to indicate that she had been moving between towns - mostly in rural Texas - likely trying to find steady employment.[5]

Continuing my research, I discovered that on April 8,1952, Obie Waters, Mary's first husband, was convicted of theft and sentenced to two years confinement in Huntsville, Texas. He was described as 5' 8 1/2"-5'9", 144 pounds, fair skin,

blue eyes, brown hair and eyes slightly cross-eyed. He was listed as divorced at the time. It is unknown when and where he died.

Her second husband lived and died in Avondale and is also buried in the area.[6] Were these men bad husbands to her or did things to her that made the marriages not work out? Was she the cause for the divorces? These are questions I cannot answer but do indeed affect her future decision makings.

Mary had moved to Las Cruces, New Mexico from Victoria, Texas, sometime in October or November 1950 and had been living and working in Las Cruces as a waitress for only two or three months. It is believed she had been a waitress at the Amador Hotel/Restaurant. She had been living at the Talbot Courts (Mrs. Talbot ran the Las Cruces Hotel at 128 S. Main from 1941 - 1947) with her children. So, the question exists still - why did Mary move to Las Cruces? One answer could be that Las Cruces had become known as a "good-time" town with a heavy night-life and an opportunity to make good money either through work OR play. An explanation was definitely needed.

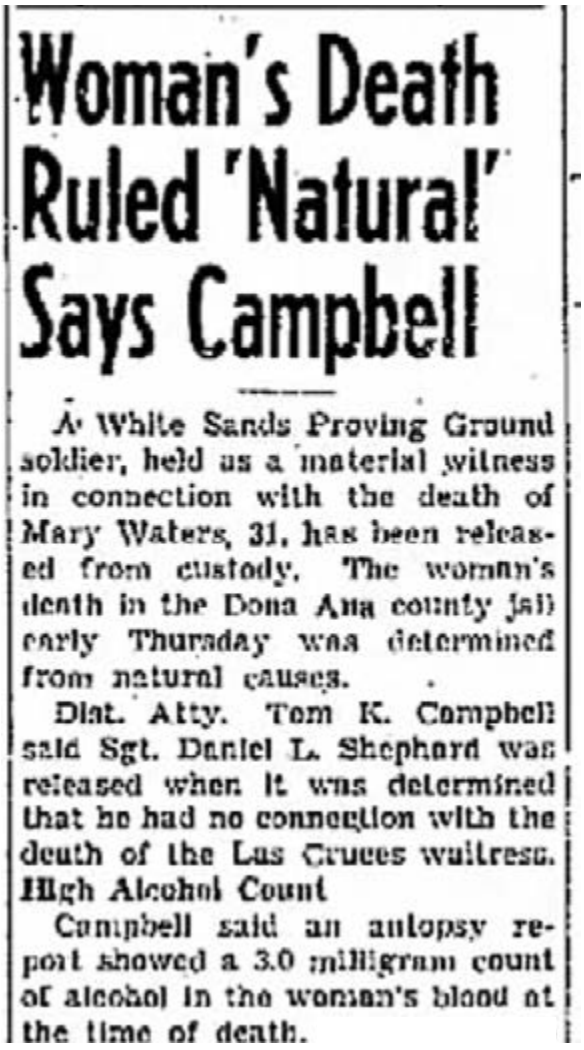
If anyone is familiar with local author Paula Moore's book about Ovida "Cricket" Coogler *(Cricket in The Web*, published in 2008), the state of New Mexico was in a difficult stage of its existence where politicians and law-enforcement, along with various judiciary and state officials, were being accused of working with/for the Chicago mob to try and turn New Mexico into a gambling mecca much like Nevada is today.

According to Ms. Moore's book, illegal gambling had been well-established in the state and being protected by local politicians and law-enforcement authorities. That is until the horrifying, ghastly and shocking death of Cricket in 1949 and the follow-up investigation by the FBI.

Convictions and accusations followed (ironically, none of which were for the murder of Cricket), and many individuals were removed or went to prison for various participations in criminal activities. This public and federal exposure scared the Chicago mob and instead of New Mexico being a gambling state, they moved their operations to Las Vegas, Nevada which proved highly successful as history has shown.

Many people's lives were changed forever (for good or bad) and the landscape of New Mexico changed dramatically as one political party was removed from power and the other remained for decades. It was a horrendous time of corruption that became a black-eye for the state.[7]

When Mary Waters' death autopsy was announced in the *Las Cruces Sun-News* on January 14, 1951 (See clipping below), it was one of the top news stories of the day and, coincidentally, was placed next to the story about the on-going investigation of Cricket Coogler's death in which the governor, Edwin L. Mechem, declined to comment on a possible special investigation of Cricket's death.



Woman's Death Ruled 'Natural' Says Campbell

A White Sands Proving Ground soldier, held as a material witness in connection with the death of Mary Waters, 31, has been released from custody. The woman's death in the Dona Ana county jail early Thursday was determined from natural causes.

Dist. Atty. Tom K. Campbell said Sgt. Daniel L. Shephard was released when it was determined that he had no connection with the death of the Las Cruces waitress.

High Alcohol Count

Campbell said an autopsy report showed a 3.0 milligram count of alcohol in the woman's blood at the time of death.

As can reasonably be inferred, due to the fact that the Coogler case was still being investigated and was highly scrutinized at every level of society, the same insidious culture amongst the local and state authorities towards a certain class of resident seems to have still persisted and existed in New Mexico (and in particular, Las Cruces) in 1951 as it had in1949, despite the on-going investigations that were already lining up authoritative figures for criminal prosecutions. Policies and procedures seem to not have been addressed or effected in the time between the two women's deaths.

According to Ms. Moore's book, while the mob was courting New Mexico, money was constantly flowing in to (and out of) many an important man's pockets and much of it was being spent in bars through liquor, parties, and by keeping certain working woman close-by for 'companionship', all under the watchful eyes of these corrupt elements of authority.

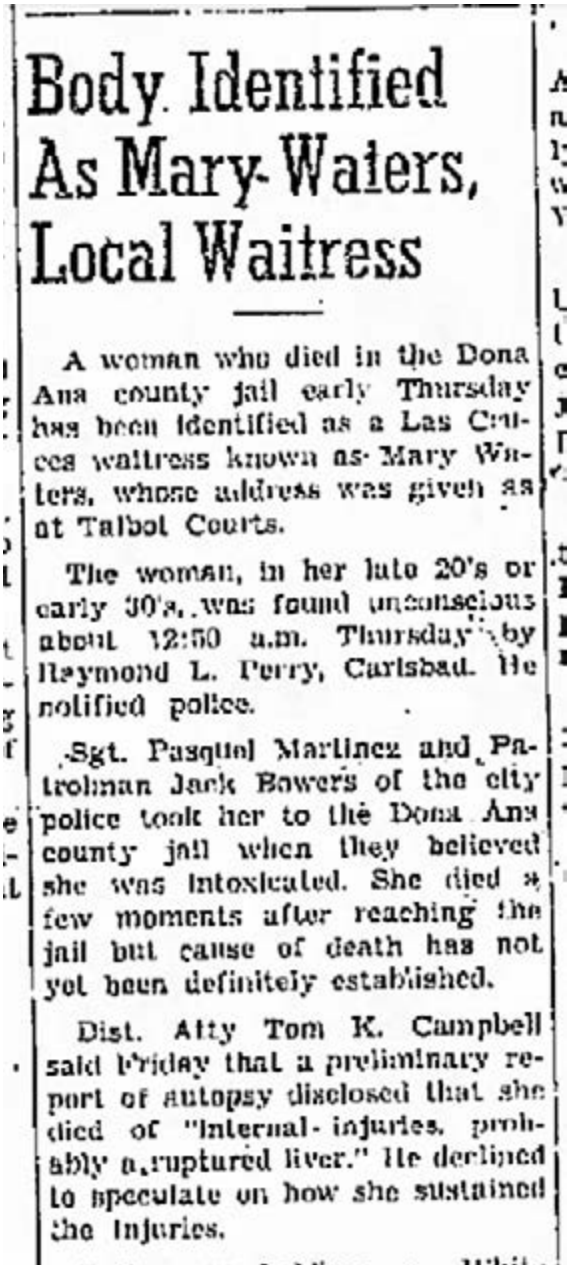
Cricket Coogler, who was labeled as a 'party girl' before she was 18 years old, worked as a waitress by day and then lived the fast life any 18- or 19-year-old would do at night and found herself associating and socializing with a variety of people, many of them powerful men.

She eventually became the favorite female companion of many local and state male officials (especially when doing business in Las Cruces) through her fast-paced life-style and outgoing personality. Cricket lived the fast life and eventually paid the ultimate price, for reasons still being debated since her death in 1949.[8]

The thought that other young women were doing the same things as Cricket - whether for attention, a chance to have fun without having to spend money they didn't necessarily have, or to be popular amongst the powers that existed - had to occur because Las Cruces was a popular place to have legal or illegal fun.

Was Mary Waters one of these young ladies? The indications are that she may have been and her sad death may have been a result of her excesses before and after her move to Las Cruces and what I call insensitive treatment by the local authorities.

The *Las Cruces Sun-News* articles of January 12 and 14,1951 relate the background to her death. A man named Raymond L. Perry (from Carlsbad, New Mexico) found Mary unconscious about a block from the Amador hotel on Lohman drive at 12:50 A.M. on January 11,1951. He notified the police and both Sgt. Pasqual Martinez and Patrolman Jack Bowers of the city police responded (See clipping below).



Body Identified As Mary Waters, Local Waitress

A woman who died in the Dona Ana county jail early Thursday has been identified as a Las Cruces waitress known as Mary Waters, whose address was given as at Talbot Courts.

The woman, in her late 20's or early 30's, was found unconscious about 12:50 a.m. Thursday by Raymond L. Perry, Carlsbad. He notified police.

Sgt. Pasqual Martinez and Patrolman Jack Bowers of the city police took her to the Dona Ana county jail when they believed she was intoxicated. She died a few moments after reaching the jail but cause of death has not yet been definitely established.

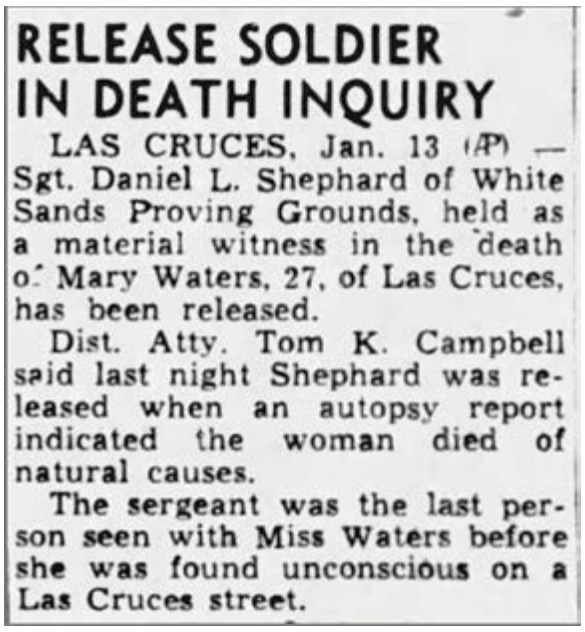
Dist. Atty Tom K. Campbell said Friday that a preliminary report of autopsy disclosed that she died of "internal injuries, probably a ruptured liver." He declined to speculate on how she sustained the injuries.

Instead of taking her to the new hospital located where today's La Clinica de Familia - Central Medical building is (575 S. Alameda Blvd)[9] as would be normal practice in today's world, the police of 1951 presumed she was drunk and transported Mary across the street to the County Court House/Jail to sleep off her "inebriation". This action was common procedure during those times and required no approval of senior officers as we will discuss further.[10]

Mary died almost immediately after being placed in a cell at the Jail after a horrific, long, loud agonizing and horrifying scream that startled the guards according to their testimony.

A coroner was called to respond from El Paso and ruled that death occurred from a ruptured liver followed by kidney failure. Alcohol was noted in her system after the autopsy. The news article further stated that she had been in the company of a Sgt. Daniel J. Shepherd who was assigned to the White Sands Proving Grounds the night before her death. He was eventually held in custody as a material witness in her death until the coroner's report exonerated him of malicious intent. Subsequently, the 3rd Judicial District Attorney, Tom K. Campbell, released him from custody

According to one news article, Mary and



RELEASE SOLDIER IN DEATH INQUIRY

LAS CRUCES, Jan. 13 (AP) — Sgt. Daniel L. Shephard of White Sands Proving Grounds, held as a material witness in the death of Mary Waters, 27, of Las Cruces, has been released.

Dist. Atty. Tom K. Campbell said last night Shephard was released when an autopsy report indicated the woman died of natural causes.

The sergeant was the last person seen with Miss Waters before she was found unconscious on a Las Cruces street.

Alburquerque Tribune, January 13, 1951

Daniel had both gone to Mesilla by taxi to party and then went back to the Amador Hotel in Las Cruces (again by same taxi) to continue their evening. What happened between the time they were dropped off and when Mary was found in the middle of the street by Mr. Perry, approximately 130 feet from the Lohman-Main Street intersection, is unknown. A check of the temperatures for that evening showed it to be about 20º F - way too cold to be exposed to the elements for long.[11]

Being an old investigator, I needed to dig deeper into Mary's life. I started by making a formal public request to the Las Cruces Police Department in June 2024 for any archived reports on Mary's death or the investigation of the death. In July 2024, the city records custodian responded, "The City has reviewed its files and did not locate records responsive to your request. More specifically, after an exhaustive search, the Las Cruces Police Department has confirmed that all efforts to locate reports from 1951 have been unsuccessful. Despite a thorough and diligent search of available records and archives, no documentation from that year could be found. The city considers its response to your request complete."[12]

Research at the New Mexico State University Archives with their vast collections resulted only in two *Las Cruces Sun News* newspaper articles previously identified.[13] Not deterred; I continued.

Further inquiries to the Doña Ana County Sheriffs and the County Clerks Offices in July of 2024 again resulted in no additional reports or information being located on Mary.[14] In July, a paid request was made to the New Mexico Vital Records and Health Statistics Office in Santa Fe for Mary's Death Record. It was received in September 2024 listing her recorded death as a 583 (according to the International Classification of Diseases of 1948, this is identified as Other Diseases of the Liver).[15] So at least her death was officially recorded with the State.

One last final inquiry to the 3rd Judicial District Attorney's Office in Las Cruces was made in October 2024 to try and research any reports related to Mary or the detention of Sgt. Shepherd -

being held as a witness certainly would have generated some type of legal document - also turned up negative.[16]

It would seem that no official reports - a mandatory requirement in today's world - were kept or archived that were directly related to Mary's death.In truth, they may never have been written at all. I found this very odd that none of these records were archived anywhere.

I also was unsure of how one's liver could suddenly rupture having never heard of this happening before. I subsequently ran a Google search[17] on the causes of a ruptured liver and the subsequent results and what I discovered was indeed very horrifying. First there is a great and immediate, highly excruciating pain in the affected area combined with intense agony as the liver bursts from inside the body. Next, and immediately following, is one's own kidneys shutting down thus causing a certain and painful death. This would more explain Mary's frightening screams and immediate death in the County Court House/ Jail as reported by Las Cruces policemen.

Having a liver rupture can be caused by many things, including cirrhosis (or scarring) of the liver from which long periods of heavy drinking of liquor products can be a by-product. Did Mary suffer from cirrhosis at such a young age? The medical examiner's report claims that Mary possessed "3.0 milligram count of alcohol in her blood at the time of her death." It could be a very high possibility.

Did the officers not realize she was suffering when they encountered her in the street and brought her to her cell? The newspaper report claims Mary screamed horrifically before dying not long after being placed in the cell. How did they not know something was wrong prior? The unanswered questions I have regarding the police response towards Mary grew and are still numerous.

However, not all the blame can be placed upon the officers to be fair. Mary's health condition may suggest she had enjoyed this fast-paced life style for some time resulting in her eventual liver disease. Was she being treated for it? Did she know? Did she have time to tell the police officers? Again, more questions than answers.

Over the past year, I have had many casual discussions with a variety of older native Las Crucens about what life was like in the city back in those days. In particular how police actions differed from today relating to crime and public interaction (inebriation, et al).

After describing an event or particular incident that they remembered, the bottom line was always "that's how things were done back then". When asked if they could remember how it was when police officers reacted during an encounter with an inebriated person that may have been disturbing the peace. Those that could remember usually responded that it had been common practice going back decades that the inebriated individual(s) was/ were brought to the local jail to sleep off the excessive abuse of alcohol. No formal charges were ever made, no reports ever written, and no standing rule was known to exist where that inebriated person had to be brought to the local hospital to be examined by a doctor unless they had been injured via an accident or fight.[18] "That's how things were".

However, in Mary's particular case, the differences between a normal inebriated person being allowed to be taken into custody to sleep off the alcohol, and Mary being found passed out and unresponsive on a cold January morning in the middle of the street for who knows how long, should have prompted the officers to react differently and side with caution and bring her to the hospital.

She could have been suffering from a number of issues besides being inebriated to include frostbite and exposure. She probably was unresponsive to their presence and possibly in a great deal of pain. There is also no mention anywhere of what she was wearing when found that night.

The distance from the County Court House/ Jail to the new hospital was a mere few blocks. It wouldn't have been a stretch of resources to bring her there. Had they encountered Mary prior to this

incident? No reports exist. Did the police treat all "assumed drunks: such as Mary in the same manner despite the sex of the individual? Woman were usually treated differently when stressed back then. Why wasn't Mary?

A Google and Branigan Library search for Las Cruces Police Policies and Procedures prior to 1949 and after 1950 could not be located in any archives. Did the police assume (or know) that Mary was the "party girl" type and decided to treat her as such even though she had only resided in Las Cruces for a few months?

Were they so used to people passing out in the streets on cold January mornings that by standing operating procedure alone, they assumed a good rest in the County Jail would be in the individual's best interest instead of being rushed to a hospital for treatment or sent home to recover?

In Mary's case, knowing what we know now regarding her critical medical condition, it is unknown if her life could have been saved by being brought to an emergency room; but by not doing so, the police took all possibilities of saving her life by a doctor out of the equation all together.

To continue with my investigation, I had to find out more information on the actual policemen that encountered Mary that cold January morning. My research found that they were both seasoned officers by 1951. They both ended up having good careers as law enforcement officers, and remained on the force for many more years to come.

However, both were also at a much older age when they encountered Mary than the normal officer today would be and had been assigned to a duty that may or may not have been desirable to them: late night/early morning on a frigid cold night in early January.

As seasoned veterans, they might not have been too happy with these circumstances. In my own experience working those shifts makes it harder to bring a positive mind-set to do your job - especially if it was purposefully assigned to you by the supervisor. Dealing with drunks and other minor criminal activity was most likely a huge part of their nightly routines. By this stage of their careers, one can assume they were none too pleased to be working this graveyard shift. Mary (and others) could have suffered because of this first-world annoyance.

Per the *Las Cruces Sun News*, the policemen were identified as:

Pasqual(e) Martinez, (May 17, 1903 - October 3, 1976). He applied to become a permanent member of the police force in 1939. At the time of the encounter, he was 47 years old and had been on the job on and off as a constable, police officer, and in the US military since 1939. In 1947 he was tapped to be a city policeman permanently upon the resignation of another and was pushed for the job by the then police chief. He was already a Sgt. when he encountered Mary in January 1951.[19]

Jack Bowers, (January 24, 1894 - September 18, 1975). Prior to becoming a police officer in 1942, Bowers was a teamster in Las Cruces (and possibly had a farm) moving cotton seed with his son. He retired from the LCPD in 1962 and moved to Abilene, Texas in 1964 until his death.[20]

The Las Cruces Police Chief in 1951 was Santos M. Ramirez who took office in 1949. (November 1, 1901 - October 1979). Prior to becoming a policeman, Ramirez was a farmer in La Mesa, New Mexico, and only had a sixth-grade education. By 1940 he was a jailer for the County prior to becoming a police officer.[21]

As to Sgt. Daniel Shepherd's life, no information could be found anywhere using Ancestry or FindAGrave websites. More research needs to be done on his life. Did he really exist?

After her death, Mary's body was taken to the then Graham's Mortuary in Las Cruces. The autopsy was performed by a physician named Navarez who came up from El Paso, Texas. Her father, who was residing in Odessa, Texas, was notified and reportedly had a family member named Mrs. E. O. Lee come to Las Cruces from Victoria, Texas to claim the body.

From the receipts found at the Graham (now La Paz-Graham) funeral home in Las Cruces, Mary's funeral may have been paid for by her father. Costs to purchase the casket and bury Mary's

remains at the Masonic Cemetery in Las Cruces (and to register the death) would come out to be about $228.58.[22]

So, what of Mary's family? As mentioned, she had three children that were living with her in Las Cruces. I was able to locate one of her children and a number of her grandchildren. Mary's eldest daughter, Judith Evelyn (Waters) McCoury, was married three times and lived her whole life in Kilgore, Texas. Each one of her three husbands preceded her in death. Her first husband was J. L. Johnson from 1955-1995; second husband was Adam Tidwell 1996 - 2005(?); and her third husband was James McCoury (from February 4, 2006 till his death on December 16, 2021).

She was described as a very religious person, was a nurse for 11 1/2 years, and had a son, Garron Don Johnson of Brownwood, and three daughters: Dewana Dell Johnson of Andrews; Tammy Dylene Caspar (husband Cliff) of Brownwood; and Shelly Johnson (spouse Gary Craddock) of Brownwood. She also had eight grandchildren, ten great-grandchildren, and two great-great grandchildren.

Judy passed away on January 16, 2022 aged 81, exactly one month after her third husband's passing.[23] Mary would have been proud to know she had a large family had she lived.

Also, her daughter, Judy, and her family, are remembered as being very religious based on the information located on her and her family's Facebook profiles and confirmed by Judy's obituary.

As of this writing the family has not been directly contacted although attempts have been made. Do they know when Mary died, that she is buried in Las Cruces and do they know the circumstances of her death - and would they want to know?

One of the earliest things I did was to try and locate Mary's grave at the Masonic Cemetery in Las Cruces. With the assistance of the great folks who work there and who physically dug through the old hand-written grave records, and the diligent care-takers of the cemetery grounds, I was able to locate the unmarked grave of Mary Alzada Waters. Also with our combined efforts, the grave was finally identified with a marker after 73 years of emptiness.

No one knew why she never had a headstone - did the family decide not to get her one? Did they not know where she was buried? Could they not afford one at the time? With the use of the commercial application called FindAGrave (which can be downloaded onto any electronic device) anyone can now locate her grave at the Masonic Cemetery and pay their respects much like I have done on numerous occasions. My investigation was far from complete, but I now knew who she was.

So, there you have it. Even though the urban legend of Mary Waters haunting the old County Court House/Jail may live on forever, I have discovered that Mary Waters was a real person with real human foibles like the rest of us. Maybe she haunts the jail because she wants people to remember her, to know she existed, or that she had a living, breathing life story and a family she loved and would like them to know where she is currently buried. Maybe she wants someone to tell them that. Or maybe she wanted someone to just identify her grave or remember her as more than just an urban legend and to delve into and investigate the circumstances of her unfortunate death.

Maybe she wanted us to bring her heart-breaking story to light because she and Cricket Coogler both suffered tragic unnecessary deaths. Maybe there are more stories like hers in Las Cruces who died untimely deaths under similar mysterious circumstances who also have yet to be discovered and are lying in yet to be located unmarked graves.

Though her story is still not quite complete, maybe - just maybe - bringing her urban legend to life was her real goal for these past 73 years, giving the people a chance to identify, discuss and debate the rights and wrongs of the leaders of mid-century New Mexico and Las Cruces so our society can be constantly improved upon as they have been over these past seven decades.

Maybe the unfortunate deaths of so many

other down-trodden people like herself under similar circumstances was what she wished to expose and inspire further investigations of these lost souls. Whatever it was or is, hopefully relating the story of Mary Waters allows her to finally rest in peace and no longer haunt the halls of the County Court House/Jail. At least I gave her name to a life. Maybe…

Sal Patricolo is an amateur historian originating from Brewster, NY who graduated from Syracuse University in 1984 with degrees in History and Political Science. After serving with the Air Force for nearly 9 years, he worked for Homeland Security Investigations as a Special Agent for 24 years, retiring in Las Cruces in 2018. He has been married for 15 years to his lovely wife, Sara, and now resides permanently in Las Cruces. He currently volunteers with the Dona Ana Historical Society as a Board Member as well as with disabled veterans organizations in the city.

End Notes

1. Telephone discussion with David Crider of Southwest Expeditions Haunted - Las Cruces, April 2024

2. Written by David Salcido • Courtesy photos Originally published in Neighbors magazine, October 5, 2020

3. Ancestry Website (www.Ancestry.com) research

4. Ibid

5. Ibid

6. Ibid

7. *Cricket in The Web*, author Paula Moore, University of New Mexico Press; 2008

8. Ibid

9. Searches through facebook.com, Facebook Group Las Cruces Memory Lane, managed by Daniel Flores; and Google Maps search

10. Random interviews with older long-time residents of Las Cruces over a period of a year

11. Google search of average temperatures the night of January 11-12, 1951

12. June 26, 2024 Formal Request for Public Records through the City of Las Cruces Records Custodian regarding police reports related to Mary Alzada Waters, January 1951

13. Search of microfiche for 1951 at the New Mexico State University Archives July 2024

14. Research of Dona Ana County and County Clerk records in Las Cruces, on July 12, 2024 for the year 1951

15. Application for Death Record to the New Mexico Vital Records and Health Statistics Office in Santa Fe, July 16, 2024. Cost $5.00

16. Inquiry to Andy Sanchez, Investigator at the 3rd Judicial Court District Attorney's Office located in Las Cruces

17. Google search on Mayo Clinic website (www.mayoclinic.org)

18. Various discussions with local older citizens native to Las Cruces not recorded in writing, but orally related

19. Ancestry Website (www.Ancestry.com) research

20. Ibid

21. Ibid

22. Documents researched by April Dean, Funeral Home Assistant, Perches-Graham (La Paz) Funeral Home, 555 West Amador Ave, Las Cruces

23. Searches through facebook.com for members related to Mary Waters

Return To
Table Of Contents

Who Was Doc Noss, The Man Who Found 450 Tons Of Gold?

By Jim Eckles

Milton Earnest Noss, better known as "Doc Noss," was a fabulist who devised an outlandish story about an implausible treasure hidden in Victorio Peak right in the heart of the Land of Enchantment. Based on the story, his descendants now make the remarkable claim that the gold in the treasure trove is worth $28 billion all by itself. Doing the simple arithmetic, that works out to be 450 tons of gold which is more gold than was extracted from California during the great 1849-1856 gold rush with its tens of thousands of miners ripping apart the landscape.

Has it ever been possible for New Mexico and the surrounding region to produce that much wealth and then accumulate it in one spot? It seems highly improbable but no one ever claimed that Noss was a talented author with a penchant for realism. The tale is so far over the top it would make *Treasure Island* author Robert Louis Stevenson blush.

In 1937 the story was fairly simple but it has grown from an acorn into a huge oak tree with branches wandering all over the place. Year after year, decade after decade, new stories sprout, leading to endless discussions about tales and yarns that are plainly pure fantasy.

Who was Milton Noss? Most people are not particularly interested in him as a person. He is simply the "finder" of 28 billion dollars in gold bars. But, maybe, we should be interested in what kind of a person he was since he has been accused of simply making the whole thing up. Was he the kind of person who might do such a thing? Maybe we can learn a little bit by looking at information about him in public records and not relying on statements from family members, investors and others who obviously have a personal and/or financial stake in the treasure story.

Doc Noss is quickly left behind as people delve into the wonderfully exotic details of this whopper. The treasure trove has thousands of gold bars, religious statues, mummified bodies chained to walls, old Spanish documents and books, bags filled with coins, church relics, jewelry, uncut rubies and chests filled with other loot... all found at the end of a tunnel large enough to drive a freight train through. There is even a deep, cold stream of water flowing through the mountain just a couple of hundred feet below the rocky peak above. To top it off, there are several juicy, far-reaching conspiracy theories that have mushroomed since the inception of the tale. They involve various U.S. presidents and leaders from several U.S. government agencies. Murder is just one of the crimes these officials have supposedly committed. It is no wonder that Noss gets lost in the shuffle.

The problem with trying to find out who Noss really was is that he didn't write a memoir, or letters home or make speeches or do much of anything to voice what he was doing or how he felt about anything. However, we do have his business advertisements which reveal something of his character. We also have news stories about him that are disinterested reports because they appear before he found the hypothetical treasure. After 1937, we mostly have statements by family, supposed friends, acquaintances, partners, law enforcement and a few others. In the end, everything is filtered through their individual points of view. Testing the veracity of their statements can be difficult.

In fact, clouding the issue are the many, many claims from people who basically said, "I was a great friend (insert desired relationship) of Doc Noss, he trusted me, and he told me I should have 50 percent (or insert the percentage you think is

believable) of the treasure and give the rest to Ova." On the other hand, the Noss family says Doc was very secretive so it is unlikely he had all of those close friends to leave half the treasure to. We, as outside observers with no interest in claiming a gold bar, find it difficult figuring out which claims, if any, are legit. Mostly it boils down to "he said" "she said."

Over the years I have read most of the books concerning the treasure found by Noss in Victorio Peak and have heard Terry Delonas, Doc's step grandson and the current spokesman for the family, recount it to audiences. The basic tale goes something like this.....

In the fall of 1937, Noss was deer hunting with friends in the Hembrillo Basin in the San Andres Mountains, about 40 miles in a straight line northeast of Las Cruces, NM. He climbed up Victorio Peak to have a look around. This small 400-foot-high peak is flanked by ridges to the east over 7,000 feet above sea level and a long ridge to the west at around 6,000 feet.

When it started to rain, Noss came across a natural opening in the peak near the top and took shelter. He later claimed there were Native American rock art images on one wall and when he moved a rock on the floor he felt air rush up past him. He came back some days later with his wife Ova, leaving her to guard the entrance, and he climbed down the shaft.

It is reported that he found passages, caves, squeeze points, a tunnel large enough to run a train through, a cold stream and several rooms filled with the beforementioned loot, all guarded by mummified bodies or skeletons (take your pick on mummies vs bones). The focus of everyone's attention since word of his discovery spread is the gold which was described as bars stacked like cordwood. He estimated there were thousands of bars with most weighing 40 or 80 pounds each. By the way, Noss had a streak of gray hair just above his forehead. Delonas has said it was caused by the fright Noss received when he encountered the mummies in the cavern.

Milton Earnest Noss portrait. White Sands Missile Range Museum Archive.

After two years spent removing hundreds of bars and various other valuables, Noss supposedly hired a mining engineer to enlarge one of the squeeze points to make it easier to extract the gold. Instead of enlarging the opening, the blast caused a cave-in and Noss lost access to his treasure in 1939. Thereafter it was a struggle for him to reopen the shaft by enlisting the support of investors. In 1949, he was shot and killed by Charley Ryan, one of those investors. Ryan was tried for murder in Las Cruces and a jury ruled it was self-defense.

One might ask why Noss needed investors if he had hundreds of gold bars at his disposal. The standard answer is that it was illegal for citizens to own gold in those days. So, he sold them privately and he tried to fence them across the Mexican border on the black market. According to John Clarence (real name Jack Staley), in his *Gold House* trilogy (written at the

Victorio Peak as seen from the Hembrillo Battlefield to the north - looking south. Photo by the author.

behest of the Noss family), Noss was only getting $20 an ounce for his bars when the official price was $34 an ounce. The family has said he didn't like getting taken advantage of so he didn't sell many.

If this story is true, it might tell us something about Noss. First, we need to do the very simple arithmetic. If Noss sold one 80-pound bar at $20 an ounce, that would have been a tidy sum just north of $25,000. In 1939, that would have paid for a well-equipped mining crew to go in and open up the peak. Boom, job done in a couple of weeks or months.

He also could have sold another bar and lived in a very pricey house in Las Cruces or Hot Springs while the work was being done. In 1940 the median price for a New Mexico home was only $6,800. In other words, he and his family could have lived like royalty with the sale of only two bars.. Surely, they would have appreciated it.

Most people would say the rational thing to do, the logical thing to do, would be to sell a few bars at the bargain rate and use the proceeds to regain access to more treasure. After all, there were plenty more where those came from, according to the family, so one or two sold at basement prices would be a wise investment. The dividends would have been huge. But he didn't do that. Instead, he spent years working like a common laborer inviting questionable investors to pay for the effort.

Why? Maybe this is insight into his character? It is hard to say for sure because the whole tale of hundreds of bars hidden in the desert and the sale price being what it was is only known to us because it comes from Ova Noss, Doc's wife. We have no idea if any of it is true.

Maybe he was crazy? We can't know for sure, but by looking at the records we see he certainly had some issues. However, family members have all assured us that he was bright and engaging, a smart guy who just happened to find a treasure and some supporters say he was always looking for treasure and that was his true calling. Acquaintances say he was dashing and had the ability to make you think he was your best friend.

Another possibility for not using the gold is that the story is simply a fake and there were no real bars to sell. It boils down to Noss using the old lost gold mine scheme to milk investors looking for a quick dollar. They paid for the privilege to dig at Victorio Peak with the promise of a huge payday. And it left Noss with enough money to support his family.

The third prominent possibility, one that Jack Staley promotes in his writings, is that there was a government conspiracy to rob Noss of his treasure so he had to keep a low profile to avoid them. In Staley's books, every law enforcement agency from the Secret Service and FBI down to the local county sheriffs, town police and New Mexico State Police was after the gold. Also, in on the conspiracy was the U.S. Army, a few commanders at White Sands Missile Range, the U.S. Air Force and several U.S. Presidents. There must have been hundreds, if not thousands, of government "officials" involved.

All of these added storylines have fertilized the basic acorn of a story and it has grown into that huge tree even though no one has ever found a single artifact at Victorio Peak. Not even a single coin somehow accidently dropped during all those years it took to accumulate that much loot. That lack of evidence has led some believers to say Victorio Peak was a decoy used to lead thieves away from the real burial site.

Another possibility that Staley relates frequently in the first book, *The Discovery,* is that Noss drank all of his profits. Staley says Noss would disappear for weeks after selling a bar and come back empty handed. The implication is that thousands of dollars were washed away with booze. In fact, Staley comes to the conclusion that by the time Noss was shot in 1949 he was probably an alcoholic.

Those are some of the possibilities for why Milton Noss didn't get rich. Choosing just one is difficult with so many possibilities. The simplest explanation, the one many of us think is the most likely, is that it was all a scheme. It was a scam just like ones we are inundated with on a daily

basis in our everyday lives in a world of instant communication.

Given that uncertainty, at least we know from several records that Noss was born on July 3, 1905 to William Scott Noss and Julia Thompson Noss in Taloga, Oklahoma. Or do we? That is the information provided by the Noss family and is presented as basic information in most books, articles, etc. Many public records have been posted on genealogical websites where Milton Noss pops up – like the U.S. census, his New Mexico prison form, his draft registration form and Taloga school enrollment records. But there are some who offer a different picture of the Noss origin story. It becomes another branch on that huge oak tree of tales.

Back in 1980, Howard Bryan, a columnist for the *Albuquerque Tribune*, wrote a series of columns about Josie Morgan Butler. He called her "Aunt Josie" because of how the family referred to her. In her story, she knew Noss as a boy growing up in Oklahoma. They were companions. She reported he was much older, that he was born in 1896.

Is this believable? The newspaper ran Bryan's allegations even after Aunt Josie's family protested saying she was prone to telling "tall tales." Also, it flies in the face of all the family information. On the census forms posted online, he is listed with a birth year of 1905. His draft registration form shows that birth year and there is a school enrollment record for 1912 where he is listed as seven years old. Later, there is a string of school enrollment records for 1920, 1921 and 1922, all signed by his father.

Why does this earlier origin story even exist and why would anyone believe it? It doesn't take much calculating to see that if Noss was born in 1896, when he was in school with seven-year-olds in 1912, he would have been 16 – shaving and driving to school. Remember when you were 7 and think what a 16-year-old was like compared to you.

What is going on here? One probability is that Aunt Josie and others needed Noss to be older so they could put him in the right time frame to meet Geronimo at Fort Sill, Ok. Their plotline requires that Milton Noss, as a young man, was incarcerated at the Fort Sill stockade for some minor offense and Geronimo was next to him in an adjoining cell. Geronimo liked the young man and generously gave him a detailed map of New Mexico showing where the seven Apache treasures were hidden, where all of the Apache bands hid the loot they took from Europeans all across the Southwest. It is a hallucinogenic tale requiring all the Apache bands to put aside their many differences and work together from 1850 to 1890 to steal pretty much all of the gold produced within a radius of 500 miles (without the mine owners noticing) and hiding it in one place... and that is how Noss got to Victorio Peak.

Since Geronimo died in 1909 and it is unlikely that Noss, as a four-year-old that year, would have been put in jail and that an old warrior would give a mere child such a valuable item. So, they aged him by nine years so he would have been at least a teenager.

The people who dreamed up this tale obviously knew that Geronimo was held as a prisoner of war at Fort Sill. Unfortunately for them, that is as far as they went. According to the Oklahoma Historical Society's online *Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture*, Geronimo indeed was a prisoner of war. However, he was not put in a cell. He and his followers were given land and materials so they could build homes and farm. He was free to move about, albeit with a guard when off the property, and he became quite famous. By then, Americans were quite engaged in the idea of Native American dignity and their knowledge of Nature.

He was allowed to travel, again, with guards, but he was not cooped up. He appeared at events such as the 1898 Trans-Mississippi and International Exposition in Omaha, the 1901 Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo, and the 1904 Louisiana Purchase Exposition in St. Louis. In 1905 he rode in President Theodore Roosevelt's inauguration parade. And he was paid for these appearances.

Geronimo was quite the entrepreneur. He made bows and arrows which he then peddled in town where visitors were ready to buy something made by the famous warrior. One article stated that on his train ride to Washington for the inauguration, he announced his presence at stops and sold his buttons as souvenirs. Before the next stop he would busily sew new buttons onto his coat so he could remove them for the next group of souvenir seekers.

After his school days, Noss disappeared from the public records until 1932. The family claims he lived with a doctor for some time who taught him how to treat foot conditions. In light of his business in 1932, that makes some sense. However, we have no names or locations. Delonas has said Noss was good at fixing bunions, calluses and corns. People started calling him "doctor" even though he was not one. The "nickname" just stuck.

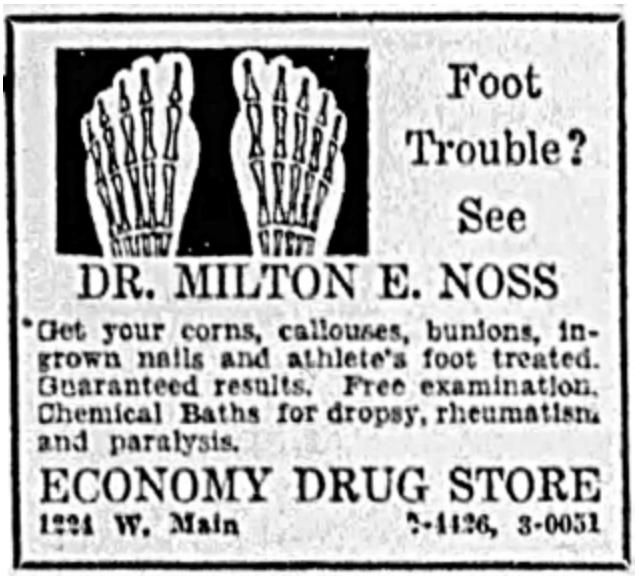
We can assume Noss didn't meet Ova Coultrup Beckwith, the woman he married, until after her divorce from Roy Beckwith in February 1931. Milton and Ova were married on October 18, 1933. She brought to the marriage a pre-made family with sons Harold and Marvin and daughters Letha and Dorothy. Meeting Ova may have changed Noss' life because soon after he developed a public presence that we can trace.

To find out more about Noss I started searching on Newspapers.com. The very first mention is in the Taloga Times Advocate on Dec. 24, 1914. A nine-year-old Milton Noss is listed on the front page for the local church Christmas program. He is listed as doing a "Recitation."

I began running into concrete information on Milton E. Noss as an adult in 1932. On Nov. 15, 1932, the *Oklahoma News* out of Oklahoma City reported an attempted robbery at the Economy drug store on West Main St. Two men entered the store, one with a revolver, and confronted Mrs. L.V. Jackson, the wife of the store manager. She told the paper, "Milton Noss, who works in the store when I am out... had been bending over washing glasses. When he raised up where the men could see him they just started backing toward the door." An abbreviated version of the article ran later and refers to Noss as "Dr. Milton E. Noss."

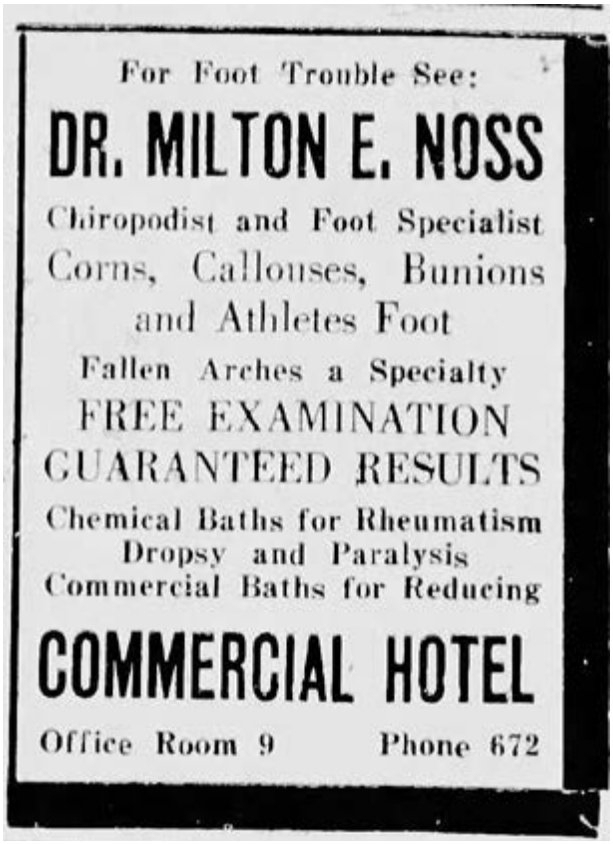
I don't know what it was about this drugstore but in May 1932 and again in July 1935 this same business was robbed at gun point. In both cases the robbers collected less than $15. Unfortunately for them, Mr. Jackson, the store owner was on duty and not his wife. He shot and killed the first one and put two bullets in the second. Mr. Jimmie O'Day, the second thief, survived and ended up sentenced to a 25-year prison term.

We know Noss was living in Oklahoma City in late 1932 and that he was referring to himself as a "doctor." Ads appeared in that time frame in the same newspaper and explain what he was doing. For instance, in March 1933, Noss ran a small display ad in the paper with an illustration that looked something like an X-ray of a pair of feet. Beside the image, it asked "Foot Trouble?" and answered with "See Dr. Milton E. Noss." The ad stated, "Get your corns, callouses, bunions, ingrown nails and athlete's foot treated. Guaranteed results. Free examination. Chemical Baths for dropsy, rheumatism and paralysis." For a location, it refers readers to the Economy Drug Store.



The first Noss ad I found. Oklahoma News, March 1933. Newspapers.com

In April 1933, he added the word "experienced" to describe himself in his ads. In the fall of 1933, he expanded his territory by setting up satellite practices in Seminole, OK (at the Commercial Hotel) and In Lindsay, OK (at the Diamond Drug Company). Seminole is about 58 miles southeast of Oklahoma City and Lindsay is about 52 miles south of his home base.



The Seminole, OK ad from the Seminole Producer, Sept. 6, 1933. Newspapers.com

Of course, there could be other places where he practiced but Newspapers.com doesn't have every newspaper ever published so I may have missed some. In some of these ads he said he maintained his main office in the capital city. In addition to listing himself as a doctor, he called himself a "chiropodist and foot specialist."

The foot ailments Noss advertised to fix are pretty standard fare and nothing that would require a real doctor. There is mention of the "chemical baths" which were probably patent medicines and could be as common as Epsom salts which is simply magnesium sulphate. If they were "baths," you are meant to soak the afflicted body part, like your feet, in the concoction with the warm water probably being the most beneficial part of the treatment. "Dropsy" is edema or swelling as a result of the buildup of fluid. "Rheumatism" is joint pain and can be the result of arthritis. "Paralysis" is just what you think it is.

Was he a doctor? Absolutely no one thinks he was. In fact, the Noss family wishes you to see him as uneducated and, because of that, someone easily taken advantage of by less scrupulous people. This plays into his later life as an innocent finder of buried treasure.

A chiropodist is what Americans call a podiatrist today. They are not medical doctors but now most go through rigorous schooling and training to become "doctors of podiatry." Currently there are serious standards that require years of college courses and follow-on medical training. Think of your dentist. He or she is not a medical doctor. They are doctors of dental surgery (DDS) or doctors of Medicine in Dentistry (DMD). Standards are much tighter than they were in 1930.

Terry Delonas, the step-grandson, has admitted that Noss was not a medical doctor. Delonas says Noss was a "practitioner" and excuses him referring to himself as a doctor.

That is an interesting spin. In every instance where Noss described himself, he used the title "doctor." It is on the census report, on his draft registration in 1940, and in every one of the dozens and dozens of ads I discovered in newspapers in three states during the 1930s. Most people would call that deceit, that we have someone impersonating a physician to attract customers to his practice. This attempt to defraud caught up with him soon enough.

In October 1933, he married Ova Coultrup Beckwith in Sayre, Oklahoma, located about 20 miles east of the Texas border. She is sometimes called "Babe." According to Delonas she was playing piano in a bar, Doc saw her and they struck up a relationship. According to Ova, in a 1973 interview with Howard Bryan of the *Albu-*

querque Tribune, she went into see Doc Noss for treatment of an infected toe and met him there.

The next year was busy. For the Noss family, it actually started in December 1933 when the *Wellington Leader* newspaper announced on page one (Dec. 7) that Noss was moving his office to the A. Baily Dress Shop in Wellington, Texas. The article said Noss "would continue his practice as a chiropodist and foot specialist." The paper also said Noss would "specialize in perfect fitting shoes." That made sense since he was operating out of a clothing store that presumably sold shoes. He would do this in other locations, most notably in Gallup, NM.

There were also ads in early 1934 in the *Jackson County Chronicle*, Altus, Oklahoma, for an office there, 63 miles east of Wellington. It looks like he moved his operation from the immediate area of Oklahoma City to the western part of OK and into the Texas panhandle.

Maybe it was the influence of Ova, but as he moved west after his marriage, his ads grew larger (more space on the page) and more elaborate. These ads promoted his foot fixing business, adding "broken or fallen arches a specialty." Such "display" ads would have been expensive.

In January 1934, Noss veered out into new territory with a couple of prosaic ads mixed with a bit of vaudeville. The foot clinic ads suddenly advertised "Dr. Milton Noss" as "The mental marvel of our time." He portrayed himself as an expert in astrology with a canned image of a man dressed in some Far Eastern garb and turban on his head. The ads stated that Noss would answer "your perplexing questions." One ad was headlined as "Gifts of Astrology."

Noss made his appearance in the

Jan. 18, 1934 Wellington Leader ad in Wellington, Texas. Newspapers.com

Texas Theater in Shamrock, Texas and then he appeared on K.A.S.A. radio in Elk City, Oklahoma doing the same thing – twice a day according to an ad in the *Shamrock Texan* newspaper.

It certainly appears that Milton and Ova were trying to get established in this new area in early 1934. They were spending significant money for the ads and we assume they had to pay to rent the theater unless they had somehow finagled a deal to be entertainment for the theater owners and didn't have to rent the hall. I'm guessing that Milton and Ova were a real team, a team trying to make a splash in the area. Could it be that she pushed for bigger and better? The situation was an unusual mix of a questionable medical practice, patent medicines and a carnival act with Noss as the Carny.

The dream of being successful in Wellington evaporated a few months later in June 1934 when Noss was arrested for theft and practicing medicine without a license. These elaborate display ads said that Noss was a very experienced doctor who had helped many people in the region. They stated that Noss "treats the body from the foot." That little bit may have been a bit much. Some readers might have assumed "doctor" Noss treated more ailments than those of the foot, that he could fix your shoulder or gall bladder or earache problems by working on your feet.

On June 7, 1934, on page one of the *Wellington Leader*, the headlines read that "Dr. Milton Noss arrested" and that he was "Released on Bond of $750." He was arrested by Sheriff George Curry for stealing a hat he claimed was for his father and he was taking it for William Noss to try on. The second charge of practicing medicine without a license was probably what drove the high bond amount. That was a pretty serious amount of money in 1934. Either the community thought it was fairly serious crime or Noss got crossways with someone important in the area.

At this point Milton Noss disappeared from Oklahoma and Texas. According to Terry Delonas, he jumped bail and went to New Mexico. Sure enough, Noss pops up in the Oct. 27, 1934 Santa Fe *New Mexican* in a blurb announcing that he moved his foot clinic from Oklahoma City to the Gans Building in Santa Fe. In the newspaper ads he ran, he offered a special – a free pair of shoes if you let him fix your fallen arches. Also, the newspaper stated "Dr. Noss will be here permanently," a claim made in other towns but quickly forgotten as he bounced from one place to another.

Presumably Noss left Wellington quickly since he jumped bail. It didn't take him long to establish a business in New Mexico. The *New Mexican* piece said Noss had spent several months in Las Vegas, NM before moving to Santa Fe. No mention is made of practicing in the panhandle of Texas.

It turns out that 1935 was not kind to Milton Noss either. On Jan. 10, 1935, the *Carmen Headlight* in Carmen, OK reported the death of William Scott Noss on Jan. 6. He was 90 years old. The story says that William Noss died while visiting his daughter, Mrs. Cecil Wilson (Clara Noss). It added that the elder Noss had come to Carmen after a visit to Santa Fe – presumably to see his son Milton. "Dr. Milton E. Noss" is listed as a survivor and there is no indication that he visited for the funeral.

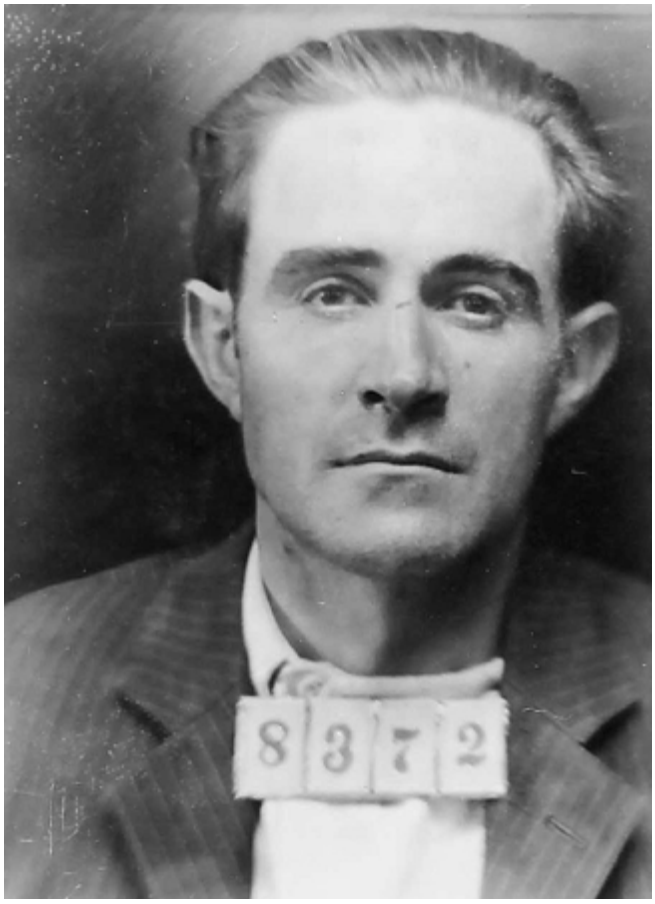
Then things really took a turn for the worse in early summer when, according to his New Mexico prison record, Noss was arrested in Roswell, NM for "insulting while armed." According to District Judge James McGhee, "Noss went in Ann's Place (a beer parlor) and roundly cursed out a number of people while showing them his gun and telling them that he would kill the first one that made a move."

At his trial, he pled guilty and was sentenced to 6 to 9 months in the New Mexico State Penitentiary. His intake record showed he was "white," a "protestant," had "10 years of education," he smoked and drank liquor, his occupation was "foot doctor," he was 30 years old, his parents were born in Missouri and Iowa, and, finally, he was an American. Interestingly, it lists the fact that he was married and then showed "1" for number of children – not sure who that would be. Tied to

this was an address for Ova in Long Beach, California on East 17th St. Long Beach is where some of her family were living at the time.

The document also describes Noss' attributes. He was 5"8", weighed 146 pounds and had "med bro" hair. His eyes were also brown, his complexion was said to be "fair," he had a 32" waist, size 9 shoes and "good" teeth. Also listed were a number of "cut scars" on his body.

More detail of the crime was added by the judge when he was asked for information by the parole board at the prison. Judge McGhee wrote "The officers informed me that this was a particularly aggravated case" and that Noss "had a deputy sheriff's and detective agency badge which he was displaying." In another note from the judge he wrote that he had heard Noss was a blackmailer and he considered the man a "bad egg." Is this the same lovable guy the family wants everyone to believe?



This is the Milton Noss mugshot from his prison intake report taken in July 1935. Later in our story we'll discuss Noss' claim to be 3/4 "Cheyenne Indian." I have informally asked dozens of people what ethnic background they might see in this photo. They do not know who it is when I ask. Not a single one has said, "Native American." Most see a European of some sort. New Mexico State Archives, Clyde Tingley collection.

Noss was sentenced on July 15, 1935 and released on parole on November 29 which is obviously less than the six months prescribed. The parole agreement Noss signed stated he was to immediately proceed to Pecos, San Miguel County, and to remain there for at least three months. The boilerplate on the form stated, "The said M.E. Noss shall carefully and cheerfully obey all of the foregoing rules governing the conduct of prisoners while on parole."

On December 12, 1935, less than two weeks out of the Big House, Noss ran an ad in the Santa Fe *New Mexican* saying he would be in Tererro, NM on Monday, Wednesday and Saturday each week to work on people's feet. One would guess that since he was in Pecos he would have set up shop in Pecos or Las Vegas, both in San Miguel County. Today Tererro is just a spot on the map north of Pecos. However, when Noss was going there, about 3,000 people lived in the mining camp because of the lead and zinc mines. Probably a lot of men needed their feet fixed. The mining company eventually pulled out and removed all of the camp development which is why there isn't much left.

The next item in the Noss prison story is his pardon. True believers emphasize that Noss was pardoned by Governor Clyde Tingley as if the governor had stepped in to right some wrong and free, if not an innocent man, at least a good family man.

The kernel of truth is that Noss received a pardon on March 3, 1936, after he completed his parole. However, he was not forgiven. The pardon was standard for criminals who successfully completed their prison and parole time. What the state

was doing was simply restoring a felon's right to vote, to hold office and own a gun – just like any other citizen. He had paid his debt to society and was given the opportunity to prove his worth. The pertinent part of the pardon reads: "Whereas said defendant has conducted himself in a law-abiding manner during his liberty and it appears that the ends of justice have been met and that he is entitled to executive clemency; Now, therefore, I, Clyde Tingley, Governor of the State of New Mexico, by virtue of the authority in me vested, do hereby grant to said M.E. Noss a complete pardon from further service of said sentence and a restoration to his full rights of citizenship."

In 1936 Milton Noss does not show up in any newspaper in the Newspapers.com library of papers. At some point he moved to Hot Springs, NM, (now called Truth or Consequences) and set up his own shop. This time it wasn't in a hotel or part of dress shop, drugstore, or shoe store. He had his own offices.

When you look at copies of the *Hot Springs Herald* for 1936, you see why Noss might have wanted to go there. Hot Springs was a booming little community. The state was building a $400,000 hospital for crippled children, the Virginia Ann Clinic was underway, a new water system was being constructed, a new theater was being built, a golf course was in the offing, and just down the road, construction of Caballo dam was about to begin. The dam project was estimated to be worth $2,500,000. The hospital for polio victims eventually reached a price tag of one million dollars according to the paper.

Ad from the Hot Springs Herald in May 1937. Later he would add the term "graduate Practipedic." NMSU Library Archives & Special Collections.

In 1937, Noss was well established in Hot Springs. There are only a few ads in the paper but maybe he didn't need as many with his office and large sign on the roof line. In May, his ads used the same approach he pitched in years before but he added the word "graduate" to the mix. This was probably done to imply he had gone to school and had been trained by experts. By November, that was expanded and he was telling customers he was a "graduate Practipedic." Maybe he calculated that such a strategy might help him avoid the legal problems he encountered in Wellington, TX.

It sounds pretty good but what is Practipedics? According to the American School of Practipedics in Chicago, it is "The science of giving foot comfort and correcting the cause of foot and shoe troubles... based on the experience, inventions and methods of Dr. William M. Scholl." That's right, the school is an invention of the same Dr. Scholl we still know today with the company's plethora of foot products offered pretty much everywhere.

William Scholl was a medical inventor and entrepreneur who was also, maybe, a doctor. When you look him up on the web there are some who vigorously question his credentials as a medical doctor. However, there is no doubt he invented and then manufactured and sold dozens of useful foot care products.

At the beginning of the 20th century, he owned a large business making everything from arch supports to corn plasters to foot soap to toe separators. His problem was getting his goods into the hands of everyday people all across America. His solution was to train shoe dealers and others on how to use and sell the products. One of his ads stated, "There is a Dr. Sholl Appliance or Remedy for every foot trouble. And, for your convenience, arrangements have now been perfected whereby your own local shoe dealer or department store can supply you with these wonderful comfort givers."

The genius of this was that he provided the

materials for the training as a home study course. It was a book titled "Elementary Course in Practipedics" and can still be found on the web. There are a few chapters on anatomy and common problems with explanations of their symptoms, causes, diagnosis and then the Practipedic correction or product to fix it. There is even instruction on how to behave with customers and what works in selling them Scholl's products.

An important part of this was for the student to memorize the anatomy terms for the foot and ankle. Just like medical doctors, that jargon goes a long way in building confidence in the physician and intimidating the patients with a vocabulary of bewildering terms that very few people know. Most patients will rarely interrupt and ask for an explanation when every other word spoken is an unknown.

Each chapter has a quiz to prepare students for the final exam which is mailed to them. They took the exam with an open book so one would assume most people easily passed.

The book does make it clear, "This course of study is intended to qualify one to scientifically fit shoes, appliances and other devices that are designed and recommended for specific purposes and nothing more. It gives no one the right to give treatments of any kind whatsoever and the instructors wish to make it clear that its graduates should not deviate from the instruction given herein."

Some of the book is devoted to all of Scholl's products, pages of them, and how to order them and fit them to customers. Scholl was a true American entrepeneur.

There are a few famous photos of Doc Noss and Ova in front of the Noss foot clinic. We assume it is his office in Hot Springs because at his other locations he was in a hotel, drug store or clothing store. This photo shows a large sign on the roof line that shows "Dr. M.E. Noss Foot Clinic." Noss is standing below it carrying a black medical bag just like those you've seen in movies. Seated to the side is Ova decked out in a white nurse's outfit.

Most people focus on just that. However, there is more in the photo. The top half of the sign says, "Try Dead Shot Remedies" and "Try our money back guarantee." Dead Shot Remedies seems to be an interesting addition to the Noss business as they were patent medicines. Except I found a notice in the *Oklahoma News*, March 24, 1933, announcing Dr. Noss sold "Dead Shot Liver and Kidney Medicine."

Dead Shot Remedies were made by the Comstock family in a factory in New York. The company began in the mid-1800s and offered dozens of medicines with very prosaic names. There was "Oldridge's Balm of Columbia," Dr. Sphon's Headache Remedy," "Nipple Salve," "Itch Ointment," and "Poor Man's Plaster." By the time Doc Noss was peddling patent medicines, the government was providing more oversight and Comstock was mostly pushing Indian Root Pills, Dead Shot Worm Pellets and N.&B. Liniment. The Dead Shot pellets were for round and pin worms and sold as "medicated candy." Their ads stated, "Few people realize how prevalent worms are in the human body and the damage they can do." They promoted giving the pellets to children to save their lives. Kind of a 'better safe than sorry' argument.

There were dozens and dozens, maybe hundreds, of patent medicines at one time. Most were concocted by entrepreneurs who had no problem adding opium derivatives, alcohol and other additives which would make you feel better even if they weren't curing anything. Another very common form of these medicines was as a laxative. The Victorians and those that followed for decades were obsessed with regular bowel movements and the dangers of constipation. The Indian Root Pills were such an aid. Look around, this belief system still persists today in the United States.

Being a "doctor" and peddling "medicines" is one area where it may have benefited Noss to claim to be part Native American. A very big part of the Victorio Peak/Doc Noss mythology is that Noss was one half or two thirds or three quarters Cheyenne – the ratio depends on who is telling the story. Many of the patent medicine manufacturers created colorful back stories for their wares

about how some white doctor befriended a Native American medicine man who passed along centuries-old recipes for curing all kinds of maladies. These medicines were touted to use native plants and ingredients and their secrets were only known to indigenous peoples. Customers believed these were natural and somehow better than the medicines made in laboratories. This belief is still very strong today.

Interestingly, when governments started to restrict what could go into patent medicines, the ingredients eventually were made public. The big surprise is that most had some components that are not found in the Western Hemisphere but came from places like Asia and Africa.

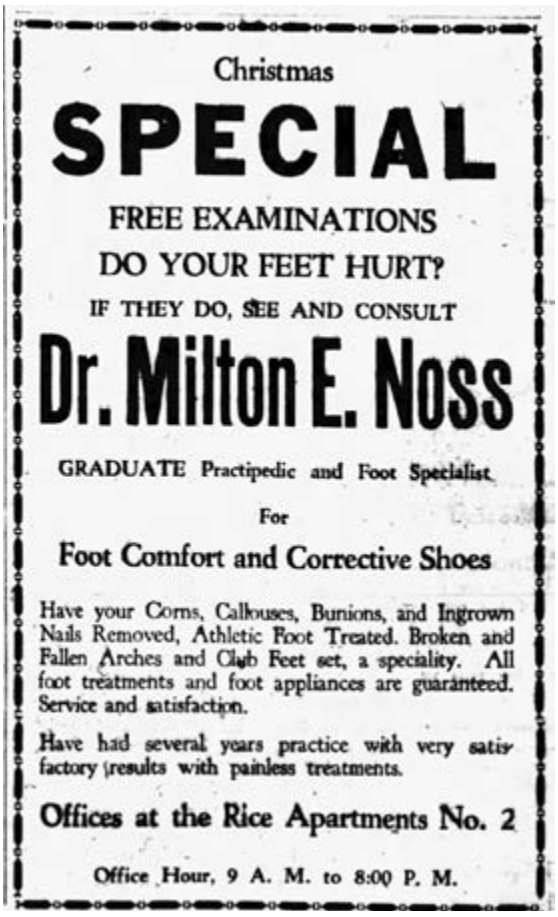
Although there is no evidence that Noss was ¾ Cheyenne or anything but the son of European immigrants, he may have stated this for his business. With such a native background, he could share his special medical insights with customers. Americans love such assurances.

The second reason for being "Indian" was the treasure story that would soon take over his life. Being mostly Native American gave him special status and knowledge about the loot stolen by the Apache and where it might be hidden. It gave him access to the magical map drawn on a piece of deer hide. It gave him a certain amount of credibility with people who wanted to believe the treasure story mumbo-jumbo, people willing to invest in his privileged knowledge.

By the end of 1937, Noss returned to the same shotgun approach he used in Oklahoma and Texas. He branched out to other New Mexico communities. In December 1937 and January 1938, he ran ads in the Carlsbad, NM *Current Argus*. Carlsbad is 280 miles from Hot Springs. In the 30s it may have taken most of a day to make the drive so it was not a simple effort to branch out and travel back and forth.

In Carlsbad he offered a "Christmas Special" to customers – a free foot exam. Again, he emphasized he was a "GRADUATE Practipedic" and was a specialist for "foot comfort and corrective shoes." He added he could treat club feet as well as arches. His office was at No. 2 in the Rice Apartments.

On Jan. 10, 1938, he ran a nice-sized display ad in the *Current Argus* with "Dr. Milton E. Noss" displayed prominently at the top advertising his "foot clinic." It stated, "Dr. ME Noss has graduated as an arch builder, practipedics and foot specialist."


Christmas

SPECIAL

FREE EXAMINATIONS

DO YOUR FEET HURT?

IF THEY DO, SEE AND CONSULT

Dr. Milton E. Noss

GRADUATE Practipedic and Foot Specialist

For

Foot Comfort and Corrective Shoes

Have your Corns, Callouses, Bunions, and Ingrown Nails Removed, Athletic Foot Treated. Broken and Fallen Arches and Club Feet set, a speciality. All foot treatments and foot appliances are guaranteed. Service and satisfaction.

Have had several years practice with very satisfactory results with painless treatments.

Offices at the Rice Apartments No. 2

Office Hour, 9 A. M. to 8:00 P. M.

Ad in the Current Argus in Carlsbad during December 1937. Note, this is after he supposedly discovered treasure of all kinds in Victorio Peak. Newspapers.com

It should be noted we are now talking about the period following his supposed discovery of the treasure in Victorio Peak in November 1937.

Next, he went to the opposite end of the state by setting up shop in Gallup, NM. The June 29, 1938 *Gallup Independent* announced that Noss had arrived in Gallup after being in Hot Springs for two years. Maybe the foray to Carlsbad was disappointing and held no promise so he moved on to fish elsewhere.

Believers have two alternative explanations for him frequently moving around at this point. The first is that he

had a map for the seven Apache treasures and was looking for their various locations in New Mexico. The idea is that he would go to an area, place some ads and question locals about possible locations of mountain caves or tunnels.

The second explanation is that he was trying to hawk gold bars he had retrieved from Victorio Peak. This one seems really far out as a foot doctor sitting in town for a few weeks selling gold bars would probably attract a lot of attention. It would only take one potential customer to blab and everyone, and I mean everyone, would be talking about it. Also, he moved around a lot in Oklahoma and Texas long before ever discovering a treasure. Could he have been looking for Apache gold bars on the plains of the Midwest?

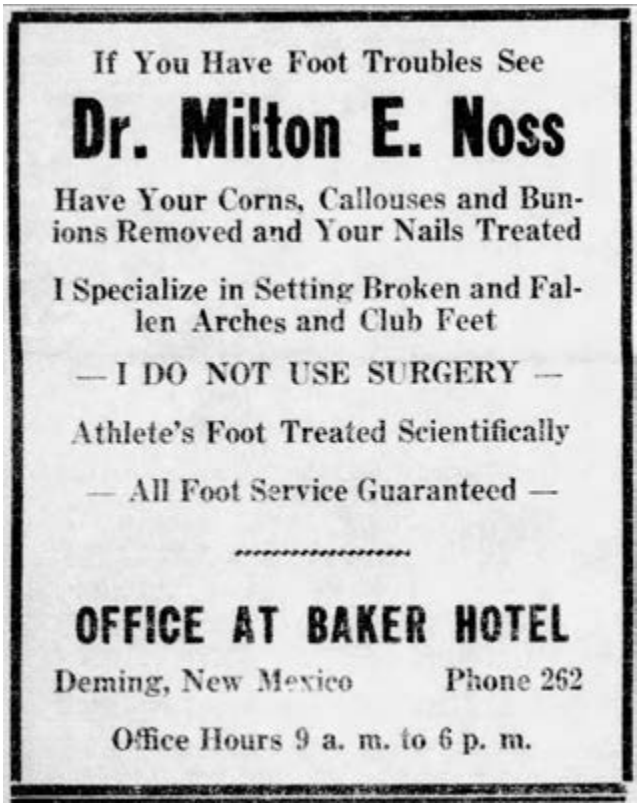
In Gallup, Noss ran ads in the paper in June, July, September and October. Unlike his Hot Springs office, he was set up again in temporary quarters at Swinford's Shoe Dept. They sold "health shoes" and could order "supports." This is that Dr. Scholl's angle again.

In his Sept. 21, 1938 ad, he stated, "My certificates and degrees are your protection." In other words, here was a guy so well trained, you were guaranteed to get safe and dependable treatment.

By now it is almost a year since he claimed he found the treasure and is still working hard at the foot doctoring business with new angles in his ads in attempts to bring in new customers. And there weren't just a couple of ads in Gallup. There were dozens of them.

At the end of the year, he moved again. This time I found a series of small classified ads in the "Business and Service Directory" of the *Albuquerque Journal*. On Dec. 15, he announced he would be "permanently" located in the Combs Hotel lobby in Albuquerque. These little ads ended on Jan. 9, 1939.

It wasn't long before Noss took off again, this time for Deming and Lordsburg, NM. On March 24, 1939, on page 4 of the *Deming Headlight*, Noss announced his presence in the community. In this case his office was at the Baker Hotel with a phone number of 262 and office hours from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. By the way, the hotel still stands at the corner of East Spruce and Silver Ave.


If You Have Foot Troubles See

Dr. Milton E. Noss

Have Your Corns, Callouses and Bunions Removed and Your Nails Treated

I Specialize in Setting Broken and Fallen Arches and Club Feet

— I DO NOT USE SURGERY —

Athlete's Foot Treated Scientifically

— All Foot Service Guaranteed —

OFFICE AT BAKER HOTEL

Deming, New Mexico Phone 262

Office Hours 9 a. m. to 6 p. m.

March 24, 1939 ad in the Deming Headlight, one of Noss' last ads in NM newspapers. Newspapers.com

Three weeks later on April 14, there was a short piece on page 1 in the *Lordsburg Liberal* saying, "Dr. and Mrs. Milton E. Noss are moving to Lordsburg. Dr. Noss, chiropodist and foot specialist, plans to set up an office here in town."

On May 11, 1939 there was one small display ad in the *Deming Headlight* and that was the end of a Noss public presence concerning his foot fixing business. Again, he may have done some advertising in another community and we simply don't have access to that newspaper.

I think this is the point where Noss gave up the fallen arches business and went into the gold-investor mining business. It turns out some of those investors in his Cheyenne Mining Company were from the Deming area. Maybe he picked them up in April or May 1939. Maybe he found mining their bank accounts easier than dealing

with bunions, arches, corns and smelly feet.

From 1939 until his death in 1949, Noss doesn't show up much in the press. If he did, it was usually in a negative way. For instance, the *El Paso Times* reported on July 14, 1944 that Noss was arrested on the 12th in Socorro, NM by a special agent of the FBI on charges of impersonating a federal officer. Almost a repeat of the Roswell event with the fake IDs. The article said he was held in the county jail until he could be removed to Albuquerque for a preliminary hearing.

He must have been granted bail after the hearing because his trial didn't come up until the week of Oct. 16, 1944. The *El Paso Times* reported, Noss pled guilty in federal court "to a charge of impersonating a federal officer with intent to defraud." U.S. District Judge Colin Neblett fined him $50.

It stands to reason that Noss wasn't in the newspapers since he was basically running a version of a gold-mine investment scheme. He was careful to stay out of the limelight. Of course, being a drinker and often involved in scuffles in drinking establishments made it hard to do. There are many accounts about his drunkenness and threats, they just aren't in the papers.

Eventually though, he got a front-page splash when he was shot and killed on March 5, 1949 in Hatch, NM by Charlie Ryan, one of those gold investors. That put him above the fold in many papers in the Southwest and the stories often told the tale about his treasure. The trial of Charlie Ryan in Las Cruces added to the stories of Noss' inebriation and aggression as law enforcement officials were called to the stand for the defense one after another to tell their stories of encounters with him.

Lawrence Murray was Socorro County Sheriff from 1941-1945. When he took the stand, a lawyer asked about Noss' reputation in Socorro County during those years. The former sheriff said, "During the time he was in Socorro it was pretty good." The surprised lawyer quickly asked for a clarification. Murray replied, " Well, he was in jail all the time."

The family will tell you that the trial was a sham orchestrated by a group of conspirators looking to get the Noss gold. They will tell you Noss is only the first murder in a string of them over the years.

Today, believers and non-believers are still arguing about Doc Noss and his tons of gold. One thing that is interesting is how believers hang onto that notion of a treasure when there is a mountain of evidence that the finder lied about it and many of the details of his own life. If Milton Noss was around today, he just might be working at a call center trying to get you to reveal your bank account number so he could send you a share of a deposed prince's inheritance from some out-of-the-way country in Africa.

Jim Eckles retired from a 30-year career at White Sands Missile Range in 2007. He has written extensively about the history of the range and published *Pocketful of Rockets: The History and Stories Beind White Sands Missile Range* and *Trinity: The History Of An Atomic Bomb National Historical Landmark*. He was inducted into the missile range Hall of Fame in 2013. He has been a member of the DACHS board of directors since 2009.

The draft registration card for Milton Noss filled out in October 1940. Note that he reports himself as "3/4 Indian." This goes along with his "Cheyenne Mining Company," the group of investors and diggers that worked for him and then Ova after he disappeared. "New Mexico, World War II Draft Registration Cards, 1940-1945", , FamilySearch.org

SERIAL NUMBER 807 — 1. NAME (Print) Dr. MILTON EARNEST NOSS — ORDER NUMBER

2. ADDRESS (Print) HOT SPRINGS, SERRIA, NEW MEXICO

3. TELEPHONE NONE — 4. AGE IN YEARS 35 — DATE OF BIRTH July 3 1905 — 5. PLACE OF BIRTH Tahoga Oklahoma — 6. COUNTRY OF CITIZENSHIP United States

7. NAME OF PERSON WHO WILL ALWAYS KNOW YOUR ADDRESS Mrs. Ova May Noss — 8. RELATIONSHIP OF THAT PERSON wife

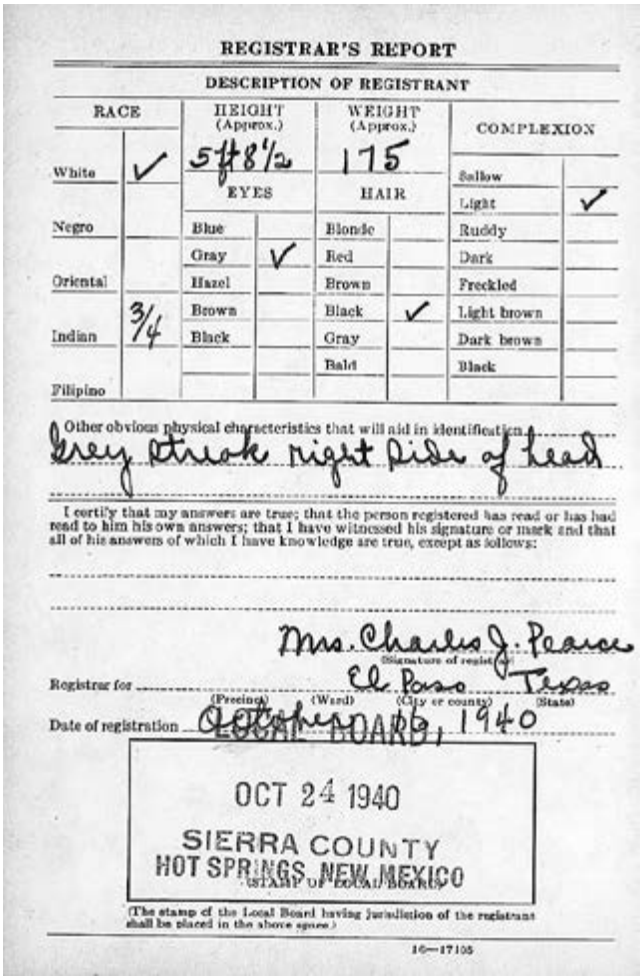
9. ADDRESS OF THAT PERSON Hot Springs Sierra New Mexico

10. EMPLOYER'S NAME Doctor — Clinic

11. PLACE OF EMPLOYMENT OR BUSINESS Hot Springs Sierra New Mexico

I AFFIRM THAT I HAVE VERIFIED ABOVE ANSWERS AND THAT THEY ARE TRUE. Dr. Milton E. Noss

REGISTRATION CARD D. S. S. FORM 1



REGISTRAR'S REPORT

DESCRIPTION OF REGISTRANT

RACE		HEIGHT (Approx.)		WEIGHT (Approx.)		COMPLEXION	
White	✓	5ft 8½		175		Sallow	
		EYES		HAIR		Light	✓
Negro		Blue		Blonde		Ruddy	
		Gray	✓	Red		Dark	
Oriental		Hazel		Brown		Freckled	
	3/4	Brown		Black	✓	Light brown	
Indian		Black		Gray		Dark brown	
				Bald		Black	
Filipino							

Other obvious physical characteristics that will aid in identification: Grey streak right side of head

I certify that my answers are true; that the person registered has read or has had read to him his own answers; that I have witnessed his signature or mark and that all of his answers of which I have knowledge are true, except as follows:

Mrs. Charles J. Pearce
(Signature of registrar)

Registrar for El Paso Texas
(Precinct) (Ward) (City or county) (State)

Date of registration October 29, 1940

LOCAL BOARD

OCT 24 1940
SIERRA COUNTY
HOT SPRINGS, NEW MEXICO
(STAMP OF LOCAL BOARD)

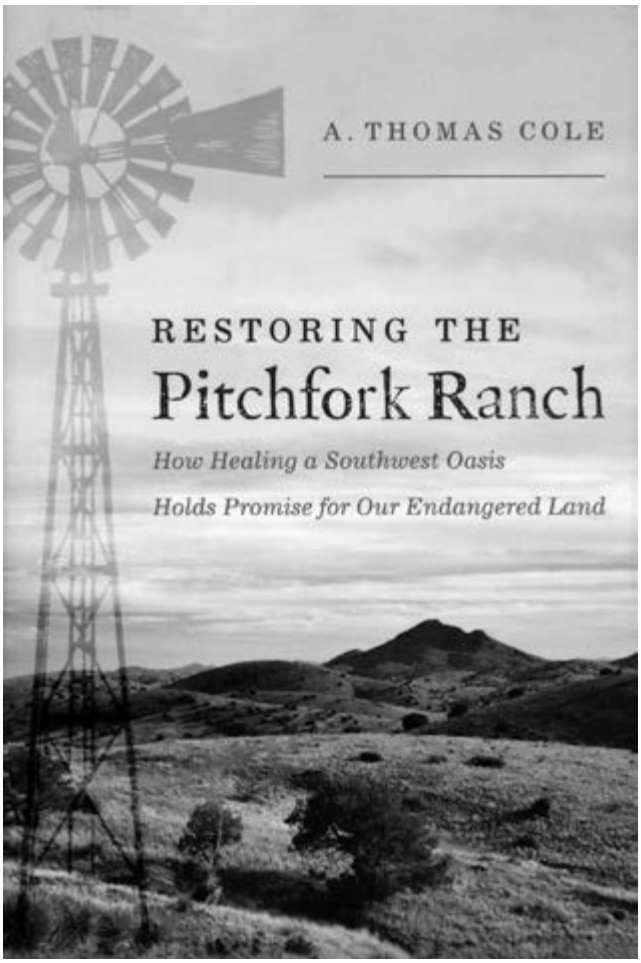
(The stamp of the Local Board having jurisdiction of the registrant shall be placed in the above space.)

16—17105

Return To Table Of Contents

Book Review

Restoring the Pitchfork Ranch: How Healing a Southwest Oasis Holds Promise for Our Endangered Land by A. Thomas Cole. Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press, 2024. ISBN 978-0-8165-5280-1, 376 pages, $29.95, hardcover.



The restoration of the Pitchfork Ranch in New Mexico's southwest corner has been the focus of A. Thomas and Lucinda Cole since they purchased the remote property in 2003. Believing that making peace with nature is the cause of our time, the couple have worked to heal the wounds found across their acreage caused by destructive agricultural and ranching practices of the past. After turning their ranch into an ecological lab and documenting their achievements, the couple now offer interested readers a proto-primer on how landowners can reinvasion their relationship with nature and experience the resiliency of the ecosystems around them. The book crafts a sharp narrative by delving into the region's history, archaeology, ecology, and geology, to show how these constructs have shaped past agricultural practices. Through this publication, we are given an inspiring guide to restoring a biologically diverse Chihuahan Desert at a critical time in human history.

The land at the heart of this restoration case study is found in southern Grant County amid rolling grasslands just north of Separ, about an hour south of Silver City. The 11,300 plus acre ranch sits at an elevation of 5,100' on the continental divide and is bisected by the perennial 48-mile long Burro Ciénaga. Cole describes the ciénaga, Spanish for "slow moving water or marsh," as the property's most important feature and the heart of the restoration efforts at the ranch.

After Tom's thirty-two year career in law in Casa Grande, Arizona, the retired couple's desire to "rebuild wild nature" (7) prompted them to purchase the worn-out ranch and implement restorative management practices and natural climate solutions with the hope of returning the grassland to its pre-European-settlement condition (8). The Cole's see the earth in crisis – global warming, species extinction, and soil loss are highlighted throughout the book – and believe an expanded land ethic, first proposed by conservationist Aldo Leopold, as fundamental for human survival (12).

Readers should be aware that the book includes considerable contextual information regarding the climate crisis humanity is currently experiencing. That is to say that Cole leads us through global economic policies and events,

as well as environmental protest movements, to ground readers in the rationale behind his efforts in New Mexico.

For those wishing to focus solely on efforts at the Pitchfork, the first six chapters will likely appeal the most. Still, Cole's attempts to synthesize the broad themes and overlapping causes of the crises is persuasive and proves enjoyable to read. His foray into the backstory of the ranch itself in chapter one and the early 1950s strike at the nearby Empire Zinc Mine in chapter ten, passages likely appreciated by the historically-minded, show an ability to adequately place historic events and persons into current narratives to help broaden our understanding of how we got here.

In chapter two, Cole delves into perhaps his most important contribution to ecosystem restoration, one of great importance to the desert southwest. The race to protect ciénagas, a keystone ecological feature, is currently underway. Cole documents his efforts to restore the battered and choked-off Burro Ciénaga, describing the work as a stewardship not proprietorship (47). Ensuring its health is required to further guard native grasslands and riparian corridors for local and migrating species. A healthy waterway slows monsoon-caused erosion, creates year-round watering holes, and operate as vital carbon sinks. With an estimated 95% of the American Southwest's ciénagas now lost, Cole has been aided in his work by twenty governmental grants as state and federal agencies have joined the effort to resurrect the "kidneys of river systems" (58).

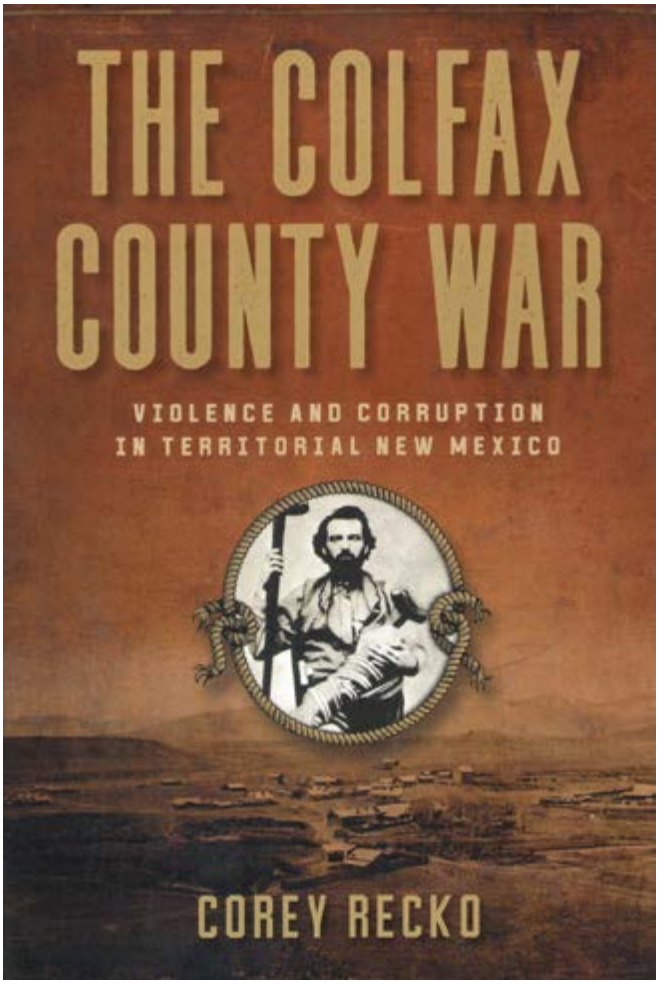
Readers will enjoy the supplementary material provided throughout the book, whether the 43 figures (photographs, maps, charts) or the wood engravings by New Mexico artist David Wait that introduce each chapter. Cole has provided five appendices, a hodgepodge of scientific and direct-action information to assist the motivated to get involved in protecting the environment. *Restoring the Pitchfork Ranch* at its heart is a clarion call. Those interested in the history of Grant County, land use policies, agricultural practice, and environmental regulation will find this publication compelling, as the author has successfully woven a sharp narrative. For those captivated by the Cole's ongoing restoration work and wish to stay up-to-date on the progress at the ranch, they can visit https://pitchforkranchnm.com to learn more

Dylan McDonald
Political Papers Archivist and Special Collections Librarian
New Mexico State University Library

Return To
Table Of Contents

Book Review

The Colfax County War: Violence and Corruption In Territorial New Mexico by Corey Recko. University of North Texas Press, Denton, TX, 2024. ISBN 9781574419320, 222 pages, $34.95, hardcover.



This is an interesting book about a range war most of us have not heard about. While this war was being waged in Colfax County, a much more popularized war broke out in Lincoln County and gave us Billy the Kid and Pat Garrett. The Colfax story didn't stand a chance.

Instead of people like Tunstall and McSween battling the Dolan monopoly/Santa Fe ring in Lincoln County, Colfax County had a group of settlers battling the Maxwell Land Grant Company/ Santa Fe ring. In Colfax County, the land company claimed 1.7 million acres as theirs even though the government ruled on many occasions against an old land grant being that large. Settlers objected and squatted on the land refusing to recognize the company's right to make them pay rent.

Eventually, a young Methodist minister who was critical of the company, Frank Tolby, was ambushed and killed on Sept. 14, 1875 while returning from one of his trips to preach outside Cimarron. Angry people mobilized and many people died in the resulting search for the killer(s).

Most of the action centers around Cimarron which was a place to tread carefully. Recko recounts an event in Lambert's Saloon in the St. James Hotel that was not even related to the war. Three Buffalo Soldiers were in the saloon when Gus Heffron and David Crockett entered and started shooting at them. All three soldiers were killed and the gunmen were able to escape.

At the time, Cimarron was the county seat. It got the seat when the gold rush ran its course in Elizabethtown and its population shrank. Cimarron suffered a similar fate and the county seat then moved to Springer and then, finally, to Raton where it resides today.

There are a couple of stories running through this relatively short book that are in parallel. One follows the efforts of settlers and their supporters to have the huge Maxwell Land Grant broken up. These battles eventually end up in the U.S. Supreme Court. The other story grows out of the assassination of the minister. Fingers are pointed at the Santa Fe Ring and Governor Samuel Axtell, accusing them of conspiracy and murder.

Accusers got the attention of officials in the U.S. Department of Interior and Frank Angel was

dispatched to investigate. This is a nice part of the book because Angel was a bureaucrat and Recko has detailed written reports to quote. It is a pleasure to read the details in a disinterested official's own words. In fact, Angel's reports doom Axtell as governor and opens the door for Lew Wallace to take over just in time for the events in Lincoln County.

Although Wallace is criticized for his lack of action in these wars, it was nice to read what an author like Wallace had to say about the governor's office in Santa Fe the first time he saw it. In meeting with Axtell, Wallace wrote, "I found him in what is called the Executive office – a large, low, dark chamber, one of many in the palace. The carpet was old and dirty. There was a large table in the center, a settee covered with stained and greasy calico, a few chairs – these constituted the furniture. On the north wall there was a great mob (I assume this is some sort of typo-Jim) of almost as yellow as the walls themselves. The ceiling was a dirty muslin tacked to the rafters. The only cheerful thing in the apartment was the fire blazing in the open fireplace. In every corner hung dusty cobwebs, every crack, and catch was a mass of sooty dust. No need to make comments. Such a picture of neglect and indifference you never saw as that office is."

I really liked how Recko provided background information about the times. He explained how the individual and community land grants originated with Spain and Mexico and how the United States dealt with them. The Maxwell Grant was the largest. Also, he gave a nice summary of how New Mexico statehood was voted on in Congress in 1875 and why it failed to pass.

There are many characters introduced in this book and Recko does a good job giving the reader a back story for each so you know where they came from, etc. At the end of the book, he also goes to the trouble to tell you what happened to each of them, if they survived the war. It made the book satisfying to read.

An Appendix is included at the end of the book which contains the letters of Franklin Tolby to his family. Also, there is a lengthy letter to the *New York Sun* detailing various transgressions in Colfax County. It is believed that Tolby wrote it and it is maybe what got him killed.

Jim Eckles
Las Cruces, NM

Return To
Table Of Contents

Memorial

Charles "Chuck" Murrell, April 8, 2024 at age 82. Chuck was born July 27, 1941, to Elizabeth Celeste and C. Hudson Murrell in Las Cruces. He graduated from Las Cruces High School in 1959, where he loved playing the saxophone and was proud of leading the marching band as drum major. He attended New Mexico State University and graduated from Baylor College of Dentistry in Dallas, Texas. He then volunteered to serve his country as a dentist and achieved the rank of captain in the U.S. Army, first at Fort Lewis Army Base near Tacoma, Washington, and the next year in Vietnam, before practicing dentistry in Las Cruces, for 26 years.

Chuck was a member of many organizations such as the Sunrise Lions Club and St Paul's United Methodist Church. Also, he served as president of the New Mexico Dental Association in the 1980s.

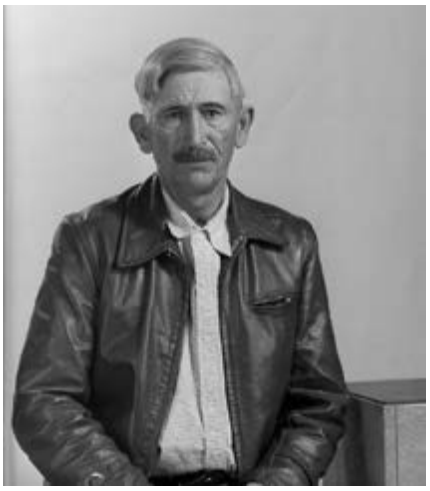
In addition, Chuck had a passion for history and was a longtime member of the Dona Ana County Historical Society. He served one year as vice president and another as president and regularly attended the society's presentations at the Good Samaritan Society's auditorium.

Chuck was an avid outdoorsman and went hunting, fishing, or sailing as often as he could. As he neared retirement, Chuck took up his saxophone again and found joy making music with the Mesilla Valley Community Band, New Horizons Band, and Big Band on the Rio Grande. He was committed to elevating his craft, challenged himself by learning to play an array of reed instruments, and embraced the synergy and fellowship created by a group of musicians working together. In his last performance in December 2023, Chuck played holiday and classical music at the Good Samaritan auditorium as a member of the Rio Sax Trio.

Return To
Table Of Contents

More Ballard Studio Images

Montoya wedding, August 16, 1930



Felipe Carbajal, undated

LTC Harold Turner, May 6, 1946

Josephine Castillo, Nov. 1934

Pete Carrera, March 21, 1932

Roy Nakayama, Dec. 16, 1940