



# NEWSLETTER

September 2009

Doña Ana County Historical Society

## President's Comments

By: George Helfrich

Although we have been having the usual hot summer, soon the pleasant Fall weather will be here and it will be time to resume the DACHS programs. George Hackler has arranged a tremendous list of speakers and a very interesting field trip to Fort Stanton (see details under calendar, September Program and Field Trip articles). The election of Board members for 2010 will be held in November, so if you would be interested and willing to serve, please call me (522-3477) or George Hackler (521-4458). After several years of superbly handling the Society's publicity information, Lorraine Southward has asked to be relieved. I have always relied on her and appreciated the outstanding job she does. Fortunately, Jim Eckles has agreed to take on this important task so necessary to the success of DACHS.

The Mary and J. Paul Taylor Scholarship Endowment fund is growing (approaching \$5,000) as more members are contributing to it with gifts and memorials. At the May meeting of the Society, the Board recommended and the membership unanimously approved selection of Dr. Gordon Owen as a Life Member in recognition of his long support of DACHS, his accomplishments as a historian, and for his donation to the Society of the proceeds from the third edition of his book *Las Cruces, New Mexico 1848-1999: Multicultural Crossroads*. If you don't have a copy or need a gift idea, consider buying a copy at the next meeting or call Carl Eichstaedt at 382-8679.

The awards Committee is working on the awards for 2010 to be announced at the Annual Banquet in January. If you have any nominations please call Marcie Palmer at 496-4736 or me at 522-3477. For more information regarding the awards, go to the Historical Society's website [www.donaanacountyhistsoc.org](http://www.donaanacountyhistsoc.org) and click on the AWARDS link.

On a sad note, we were sorry to learn of the passing of two special members, Nancy Pfaeffle and Meli Duran. Our sympathy to Felix Pfaeffle and Dave Kirkpatrick.

## SEPTEMBER PROGRAM

**Rick Hendricks will present the story of Thomas Casad**

Rick Hendricks is a former editor of the Vargas Project at the University of New Mexico. He is currently employed in the Archives and Special Collections Department at the Library and teaching Latin American history in the History Department at New Mexico State University. He recently completed work on the guide to the microfilm collection of the Archivos Históricos de Sombrerete. Hendricks has written or collaborated on more than a sixteen books and seventy articles on the Spanish colonial period in the American Southwest and Mexico. His most recent book, *New Mexico in 1801: The Priests Report*, was recently published Rio Grande Books.



**Rick Hendricks, the speaker for the Society's September 17th Meeting**

See more information on **Thomas Casad** on **Page 2**

## Calendar

- The Society meets at the Good Samaritan Auditorium, 3011 Buena Vida Circle
- Thursday September 17, 2009 7:00pm
- Rick Hendricks - **The story of Thomas Casad**
- October 4, 2009
- **Field Trip to Fort Stanton**
- October 15, 2009
- Tom Sullivan – Research on *Demise of Billy the Kid*
- November, 19, 2009
- Lynda Sanchez – *Eve Ball*
- December – **No Meeting**

### Thomas Casad

Thomas Casad, a native of Ohio where he was born in 1816, was three times a pioneer. He was one of the original settlers of Summerfield, Illinois and Santa Ana, California and was a pioneer of the Mesilla Valley. In many ways, Casad's story is the classic American westering tale. His life included town and Masonic lodge founding, gun play and flight from justice, politics, lawsuits a plenty, and adventurous travel. Casad traveled from the American heartland to California and back, survived shipwreck in the Gulf of Mexico, and crossed the Isthmus of Panama en route to California (again) with his numerous family. After a sojourn of a few years' duration, Casad found his way to the Mesilla Valley in 1874, where he became an innovative farmer, mill owner, and newspaperman until his death in 1885. ■

### Field Trip to Fort Stanton, Sunday October 4th

Join us for a guided tour of the historic old fort including parts of the fort not normally open to the public. Our tour guide will be Lynda Sanchez, the person most credited with saving Fort Stanton from destruction. Bring your lunch for a picnic under the ancient elm trees. Arrangements have been made for a tour bus. The bus will leave the East Pan Am Center parking lot at 8:00am. The trip over is expected to take 3 hours with rest stop as needed. We should return to the Pan Am parking lot about 5:00pm.

Wear comfortable shoes and outdoor clothing appropriate for the weather. An ice chest and water will be provided.

The cost will be \$10 per person. **Seating is limited so sign up early.**

For reservations contact: George Helfrich @ 522-3477 or George Hackler @ 521-4458 ■



### **BUILDING WORTHY OF PRESERVATION – 2009** **Human Systems Research, Inc.** **535 S. Melendres Street** **Las Cruces, New Mexico**

*This award recognizes a home or building in Doña Ana County that is distinguished by its age and historical character, its historical significance, or that represents historical architectural character. The purpose of this award is to encourage an owner to preserve the uniqueness of the building, in the event that renovation or rehabilitation is being considered. Residential and commercial/ industrial buildings in the county are eligible and owners may also nominate.*

Built by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) between December 1937 and June 1938, the building served as the CCC camp BR-39-N Schoolhouse. The schoolhouse was built of stone with an exterior of white stucco and plastered on the inside. The large front room with a fireplace was the library and reading room. A woodworking shop was off to the left and a classroom to the right. The center back rooms served as an office of the Educational Advisor, a photography darkroom, and the Assistant Educational Advisor's quarters. After the CCC program was disbanded, the building became the U.S. Army administrative headquarters responsible for the operation of two prisoner-of-war (German and Italian) camps in Las Cruces between 1942 and 1946. The Bureau of Reclamation sold the property in 1952 and the building has since passed through a series of private owners. Human Systems Research, Inc. purchased the property in 1998 from Pat Beckett, to serve as its Las Cruces headquarters. HSR is a non-profit corporation engaged in anthropological research, historic preservation, and public education. The building was listed on the New Mexico State Register of Cultural Properties in June 2007 and HSR has completed a National Register nomination which is slated for consideration in Washington, D.C. in late 2008.

It has recently been sold back to Mr. Beckett. ■

## Board Member Profile



**Mary Lou Pendergrass**

Mary Lou was born in Honolulu, Hawaii to a Navy family. Her dad was stationed at the Naval Air Station Kaneohe Bay on Oahu on Dec. 7, 1941, so she was a tiny child during the early Pearl Harbor attacks. She attended high school in Naples, Italy; Kingsville, TX; and graduated from Austin High School in El Paso, TX, after living in all sorts of places during her growing up years. Mary Lou has a degree from UTEP (then Texas Western) and a masters degree from New Mexico State University. She also started working on a Master's in History but started her family instead of finishing. Now retired, she taught for 33 years, lastly Math and Science at Middle School level.

Mary Lou and her husband Pat live North of Las Cruces, New Mexico on one acre with lots of fruit and nut trees, flowers, and birds. To keep busy they square dance, visit assisted living centers where Pat sings and plays the guitar, design and maintain web sites and do other computer related activities. She currently belongs to two square dance groups, the Doña Ana Camera Club, the Doña Ana County Historical Society, and the Three Crosses RV Group. She is actively interested in genealogy and photography.

Traveling was part of her life as a Navy "brat" and has continued to be so, so they travel a great deal in their motorhome.

Mary Lou has been a member of New England Genealogical and Historical Society and Sports Car Club of America, was local and state president of New Mexico Classroom Teachers Association, former president of the Dona Ana Camera Club and, until recently, one of the mentors for a local computer users group. She is now webmaster for her church and for DACHS and a Member-at-Large of its Board. ■

## National History Day Award

On May 18th, Frankie Miller, Education Chair, and George Helfrich, President, attended a gathering of the Deming High School History Club students, parents and teachers to recognize the student participants in the regional National History Day competition held at the Farm and Ranch Museum on March 6<sup>th</sup>. A number of the students had gone on to the State competition and several were selected to go on to the Nationals in Washington including Juan Rodriquez, a senior and winner of the DACHS \$250.00 scholarship award given to a regional winner going on to college and majoring in history. ■

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

### DACHS Membership Form

Please renew/enroll my/our membership in the Doña Ana County Historical Society. Memberships are active for the calendar year of enrollment and are deductible within legal limits for Federal and State income tax purposes. If you are unsure of your status or have questions regarding membership, please contact the Treasurer, Xandy Church, at 526-9774 (May-Sept. 575-536-9728) or the President, George Helfrich, at 522-3477.

### Annual Membership/Sponsorship Rates

Individual \$20  Family \$25  Student \$8  Contributor \$40  Benefactor \$150  Life \$300   
Southern New Mexico Historical Review Sponsorship \$50

**This is a change of information** Yes  No  A check for \$ \_\_\_\_\_ is enclosed. Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Check # \_\_\_\_\_

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_ Phone # \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail address \_\_\_\_\_ Newsletter via E-mail Yes  No

We wish to thank our  
Corporate Sponsors

**Bank of the Rio Grande**  
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We Welcome These  
New Members

**Freddi Adams**

**Vicki Horacket**

**Laura Dunmar**

**James Sullivan**

**Emadair Jones**

## Scholarship Endowment Donors

The Society and the Education Committee wish to thank the following donors to the *Mary and J. Paul Taylor Scholarship Endowment Fund*. This scholarship, for \$1,200, is given annually to a NMSU History student.

Roger & Celine Rothenmaier and (Matching Funds) from Johnson Controls Foundation; J. Paul Taylor; Morris & Lorraine Southward In Memoriam for Meli Duran; Morris & Lorraine Southward In Memoriam for Nancy Pfaeffle; Xandy and Bob Church In Memoriam for Jim Wright; Xandy and Bob Church In Memoriam for Nicole Cagle; Morris & Lorraine Southward In Memoriam for William Schumacher. ■



Bob Alexander, after speaking at the Historical Society's meeting on May 21, 2009

Bob Alexander, a native Texan, brought his down home speaking style and gave a very interesting, informative, and entertaining talk at our May 21<sup>st</sup> Society meeting. Bob's primary topic was the holdup of a Southern Pacific train in southwestern New Mexico Territory on November 24, 1883. However, he touched on many other interesting aspects of the realities of life-and-death during the Southwest's turbulent frontier period.

2009 Board Members  
President: George Helfrich  
Past President: Roger Rothenmaier  
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Historian: Karen George  
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Marcie Palmer  
C.W. "Buddy" Ritter  
Martha Shipman Andrews  
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www.donaanaacountyhistsoc.org

