



# NEWSLETTER

March 2019

Doña Ana County Historical Society

## Jim Eckles Will Talk Oppenheimer On March 21

Jim Eckles will give a talk called “Robert Oppenheimer: A Timely Genius” on March 21 at the Dona Ana County Historical Society’s public meeting. During World War II, Oppenheimer led a team of some of the brightest scientists in the world at Los Alamos, N.M. in designing and building the atomic bombs that ended the war in a few days. This includes the test of the very first atomic bomb on July 16, 1945 at Trinity Site here in New Mexico - just up the road a ways.

Eckles has spoken to the Society before about Trinity Site. This talk will focus on the life of J. Robert Oppenheimer and how he basically emerged from nowhere to take charge of one of the most important efforts of World War II. Most of his contemporaries were quite surprised at how effective he was.

After the war, Oppenheimer was considered a controversial figure by some and was eventually squashed by the forces of McCarthyism. Wernher von Braun said that if Op-



*Jim Eckles giving a Trinity Site briefing at Ground Zero this winter. He estimates he may have visited Trinity Site more times than any other human being at this point and no longer needs a night light when getting out of bed in the dark.*

penheimer had worked in England they would have made him a knight instead of throwing him out the door.

The talk is scheduled for March because Trinity Site will next be open to the public on April 6. Eckles, who has been leading tours to Trinity Site for over 40 years, will answer queries about Trinity Site as well as questions concerning Oppenheimer’s enigmatic life.

The presentation will be at our usual time and place...7 p.m. in the Good Samaritan Auditorium at 3011 Buena Vida Circle.



*Robert Oppenheimer and Maj. Gen. Leslie Groves at Trinity Site in September 1945 when they took reporters to see Ground Zero. They are standing beside one of the footings to the 100-foot tower on which the bomb was placed for the test. The tower was vaporized by the incredible heat from the explosion leaving four footings exposed. One is still partially visible at the site today.*

# New Old Maps Now At NMSU Library Archives

By Dennis Daily, DACHS President

If you have an interest in historical cartography and particularly maps of New Mexico and the U.S./Mexico border region, you should consider paying a visit to the New Mexico State University Library Archives and Special Collections. The department contains thousands of historical maps of the region, both published maps as well as one-of-a-kind manuscript maps.

The published maps reside within the Special Collections and can be discovered through the library's catalog, while manuscript maps are contained with the archival collections of the Rio Grande Historical Collections. The latter are listed in the online finding aids to the collections of which they form a part.

The library has recently acquired 21 historic maps depicting New Mexico, ranging in date from 1656 to 1892. Purchased through grant funding to support enhancing the library's collection of maps of

the border region, the maps show the development of the political and cultural geography of the borderlands. They also depict the contested nature of the American West, as different nations vied for control of vast amounts of territory. As a reflection of this, the maps were published in France, Spain, Great Britain, United States, Italy and Germany. Predominant are maps in French, Spanish and English.

The earliest of these maps came from the hand of Nicolas Sanson d'Abbeville, geographer to the King of France, and was published in Paris in 1656. Although the map contains little detail for this region, it represents an early European map depicting Nuevo Mexico. One other 17th-century map and two from the 18th century were also acquired for the collection, with ever-increasing detail for New Mexico and the border region.

A constant on the acquired maps from the mid-18th to mid-19th centuries are the depictions of

*See Maps Show Camino Real Campsites, page 3*



*The Nicolas Sanson map from 1656.*

## Maps Show Camino Real Campsites — CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

the Spanish parajes, or campsites, located in what is now Doña Ana County. These three sites – San Diego, Robledillo and La Rancheria – mark stops along the Camino Real and give an indication of areas of possible archaeological importance in our region. NMSU anthropologist Kelly Jenks discussed her investigations at the San Diego camp site at a DACHS meeting last fall.

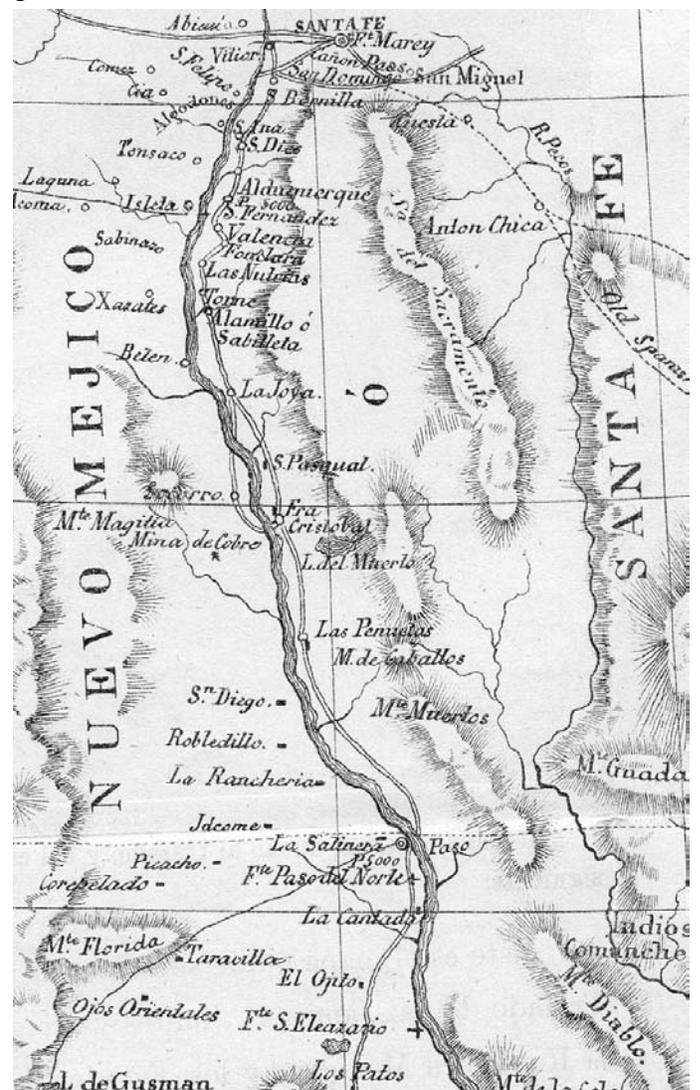
Many of the maps added to the NMSU collection date from the decade of 1845 to 1855. These maps are significant as they show the changing political boundaries before and after the Mexican-American

War. Included are a couple editions of the infamous Disternell map of 1847, which were included in the official government copies, both U.S. and Mexican, of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. The map contained serious errors that led to a confusing and inaccurate rendering of the new U.S./Mexico boundary, ultimately resulting in a negotiated purchase of more land by the U.S. from Mexico – the Gadsden Purchase of 1853.

These maps are all available for study and use in the NMSU Library Archives and Special Collections. Feel free to contact Archives department head, and DACHS president, Dennis Daily if you'd like to go take a closer look.



*A section of a map called Spanish Dominions of North America from 1811.*



*A section of the infamous Disternell map from 1847 that created so many problems later in finding where the border with Mexico was actually located.*

# Membership Notes .....

✦ The March meeting of the Dona Ana County Genealogical Society will be on March 13 at 2 p.m. at the Thomas Branigan Memorial Library in the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor Roadrunner Room. Visitors are welcome.

## *What Are You Saying?*

Frankie Lerner, the founder of the DACGS will divide the audience into learning groups and present genealogy questions. We will divide members and visitors into teams. Then give a word and the team that answers it correctly will get a point. We will go from Team A to Team B, etc. If the team that is supposed to answer does not know the answer, it will pass to another team. The words presented will all be words found in the census, death certificates, birth certificates, legal items, et al. In other words, they are all words one may run across in their research and needs to know. Some of the words are very easy and others not so easy. Abbreviations have also been included. The team that get the most right answers will win a prize.

✦ **LAST REMINDER** - DACHS dues are due. Forms are in the last few editions of the Newsletter from 2018. OR you can just send in your check with a note providing your contact information. An individual membership is still only \$20 and a family is \$25. Students only pay \$8 - that's only a plate of tacos and a soft drink. What a deal.

✦ Speaking of dues, your board of directors has decided to take up the question of dues and what the rates should be. The current rates for individuals and families were raised \$5 each back in 2007. The other categories were not increased.

There has been no serious debate yet, just informal discussions of the rates. Some feel \$20 for a membership is too low, especially with the cost of printing newsletters, printing the *Southern New Mexico Historical Review*, maintaining a website, paying honorariums to speakers, and trying to offer grants to students and community members. If you have input, let us know. We'll keep you informed.

**2019 Board of Directors**

President: Dennis Daily  
 Vice President: Vacant  
 Secretary, Newsletter, Review & Website: Jim Eckles  
 Treasurer: Dennis Fuller  
 Historian: Sally Kading  
 Past President: Dr. Susan Krueger  
 At-Large Board Members:  
 Daniel Aguilera  
 Garland Courts  
 Luis Rios  
 C.W. "Buddy" Ritter  
 Leah Tookey  
 Sara Wagner  
 Cheryl Fallstead, SNMHR Editor  
 Luis Rios, Education and Scholarships  
 Daniel Aguilera, Farm&Ranch Heritage Museum Liaison  
 Santi Martinez, NMSU History student liaison  
[www.donaanaacountyhistsoc.org](http://www.donaanaacountyhistsoc.org)

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

