

Dona Ana County Historical Society

Annual Awards Program

Saturday, January 27, 2018
Double Eagle Restaurant in Mesilla



The Greater Las Cruces Chamber of Commerce has completed renovation of the Armijo House, one of the oldest structures in the city. The chamber moved into the former home in September of 2017 and held a gala ribbon-cutting ceremony on December 8th. The house is open to view during chamber business hours.

Doña Ana County Historical Society 2018 Board of Directors

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Liaison to Farm & Ranch Heritage Museum: to be named later

If you would like to help out on a committee or with some other aspect of the Society, by all means, volunteer. Just contact one of the officers above and offer your assistance. Our email address is: 19dachs63@gmail.com Thank you.

Southern New Mexico Historical Review

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Double Eagle Restaurant & Peppers Cafe
On The Mesilla Plaza

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Doña Ana County Historical Society 51st Annual Awards Program

WelcomeDr. Jon Hunner, President
Installation of 2018 Officers and Board MembersDr. Jon Hunner

Program

Master of Ceremonies.....Dr. Jon Hunner, Vice President

Awards

Noteworthy RenovationLas Cruces Chamber of Commerce
Hall of Fame Award..... Deb Dennis
Old Timer's Award Dona Ana Bend Colony
Heritage Award..... Dolores Archuleta
Pasajero Del Camino Real AwardJim Eckles
for *Deming, New Mexico's CAMP CODY: A World War One Training Camp*
Gemoets Prize Eric Liefeld
for *New Light on the Nestor Armijo House*

Awards & Recognition for 2018

Noteworthy Renovation

This award recognizes a renovation of a historic building in Doña Ana County.

2018 Noteworthy Renovation

Las Cruces Chamber of Commerce/Nestor Armijo House

It is with incredible pleasure that the Dona Ana County Historical Society recognizes the Greater Las Cruces Chamber of Commerce for their renovation of the Armijo-Gallagher House. It was back in 1967 when the DACHS started a program to try and save historic buildings from demolition by giving them public recognition. The idea was to apply gentle pressure back against Urban Renewal.

The Nestor Armijo house was the first building targeted by the DACHS for protection and it was recognized as a “Building Worthy of Preservation” at the his-



torical society's first awards banquet . Fifty years later, the Chamber of Commerce has accomplished exactly what the DACHS was looking for.

The house was originally constructed just after the Civil War with Nestor Armijo buying it in 1877. It was the center of Armijo's many business dealings in New Mexico and Mexico. He was well-to-do and the house reflected his stature in the community as one of its leading businessmen. In the 19th century it was viewed as one of the nicest homes in Las Cruces.

Several generations of the family lived in the house until the 1970s. At that point the house fell into disrepair and then was repaired and then fell into disrepair again, depending on who owned the property.

During this time frame, the building was so obviously important, it was listed on the New Mexico Register of Historic Places in 1969 and the National Register of Historic Places in 1976.

In 2011 the Las Cruces Chamber of Commerce finally obtained the property and doubt about its future was dispelled. The chamber's goal was to renovate the house back to its prosperous years when Nestor Armijo raised his family there

and, at the same time, make it suitable for the chamber's offices.

Be sure to read Eric Liefeld's article "New Light on the Nestor Armijo House" in the 2018 issue of the *Southern New Mexico Historical Review*. According to Eric, the long accepted story that Armijo added the second floor is a myth. Turns out, the second floor was part of the original construction.

Renovation has been going on over the past few years and is now complete. The chamber has done a notable job resurrecting the house's past. Now, the entry hallway is a bit of a mini-museum with the Armijo family history displayed on the walls. Also, one room has period furnishings exhibited.



Hall of Fame Award

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

2018 Hall of Fame Inductee Deb Dennis

Since 1995 Deb Dennis has been Executive Director of Human Systems Research (HSR Inc.), a private, 501 (c)(3) nonprofit corporation actively working in archaeology, anthropology, and cultural preservation. In 2006 Deb met with the Doña Ana County Historic Buildings Advisory Committee to discuss HSR's possible acquisition of the historic Amador Hotel. The matter was resolved when Doña Ana County reiterated its \$700,000 asking price. But by 2007 a new group, the Amador Museum Foundation, emerged, intent on helping the City of Las Cruces acquire the Amador and recast it as a museum. Buddy Ritter invited Deb to join the board of the new Foundation.



Deb accepted Buddy's invitation and it changed her life. Board members including Buddy, Chuck Murrell, and George Helfrich welcomed Deb and shared their deep love for the old building. In turn, Dr. Terry Reynolds helped Deb learn about the Amador family and their effects on the growth of the area. Deb essentially fell in love with the Amador and its place in the life of the Mesilla Valley.

After a comprehensive study by Kells + Craig Architects of Albuquerque recommended new uses for the building, the Amador Museum Foundation evolved into the Amador Hotel Foundation. Deb evolved too. As

secretary or vice president of the Foundation she has worked with five Foundation presidents and a wide variety of Board members; with four City liaison officers, two Facility Directors, three City Managers, and a City Council that is changed with each election. Throughout, Deb has been a steadying presence, using her numerous skills to help move the project forward.



Preserving a cultural resource such as the Amador can bring a community together. Too many long-time Las Cruces live with hearts wounded by the loss of St. Genevieve Church. Losing the historic Amador Hotel is not an option. Deb's love for the Amador and her dedication to its future will continue to be steadfast. The ghosts of the past would have it no other way!

Past Hall of Fame Inductees

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|------|----------------------------|------|-------------------------------|
| 1983 | Carmen Freudenthal | 2001 | Charles Miles |
| 1984 | Mary D. and J. Paul Taylor | 2002 | Karl Laumbach |
| 1985 | Herman Weisner | 2003 | Eva Jane Matson |
| 1986 | Ilka Feather Minter | 2004 | Bob Pick |
| 1987 | Calvin Lee Traylor | 2005 | George Helfrich |
| 1988 | Leon Metz | 2006 | Jo Tice and John Porter Bloom |
| 1989 | Lee & Christine Myers | 2007 | Donna Eichstaedt |
| 1990 | Michael R. Taylor | 2008 | Dr. Jon Hunner |
| 1991 | Patrick Beckett | 2009 | Charlotte Ann Priestley |
| 1992 | Louis Ray Sadler | 2010 | Marcie Palmer |
| 1993 | Bradley Blake | 2011 | Allan Holmes |
| 1994 | Jesse Scroggs | 2012 | not awarded |
| 1995 | Alice Wilbur Gruver | 2013 | Sally Kading |
| 1996 | Gerald W. Thomas | 2014 | not awarded |
| 1997 | William P. Stevens | 2015 | Toni Laumbach |
| 1998 | Archie Beckett | 2015 | Heather Pollard |
| 1999 | Austin Hoover | 2016 | Doyle Piland |
| 2000 | Gordon Owen | 2017 | John Smith |

Old Timer's Award

This award identifies a cherished object, a natural phenomenon or a cultural tradition prominent in the heritage of the Mesilla Valley deserving of public attention and recognition as an important part of the physical character of this region.

2018 Old Timer's Award

Dona Ana Bend Colony Acequia Madre 1843

By the 1830's the farmable land along the Rio Grande in El Paso del Norte had been claimed. Men without land would have to move away from the security of El Paso to find land along the river. This movement prompted requests for land grants north of El Paso which placed new settlements in hostile Indian country.

In 1839 a petition for colonization of the Dona Ana Bend area on the Rio Grande was submitted and, although it was approved, it was not implemented. On July 3, 1840 a second petition was submitted saying colonization "would alleviate suffering in the El Paso del Norte area." This grant request was also approved but again finding men willing to take on the task of turning the often capricious river into a life stream for farming, building a town and providing safe haven for its occupants was daunting. The original list of over 100 men dwindled to 33 and on January 26, 1843, only 14 men left El Paso to establish the Dona Ana Bend Colony.

Their first priority was to dig a ditch for irrigation; the Acequia Madre (Mother Ditch). Alone in an inhospitable land, using wooden shovels and half iron hoes, eating the barest provisions and wearing worn and tattered clothing, they worked tirelessly to bring water from the Rio Grande to crops to be planted in the spring and summer. A good harvest in the fall would ensure winter survival. Not taking time from their labor to build housing, they lived in the hills around them in crudely constructed shelters. To complicate their hard days of labor they were on constant watch for hostile Indians. A temporary peace treaty was negotiated with the Mescalero by General Mauricio Ugarate which encouraged the 14 men to hold to their belief of a safe future.

It took them three months (February to April, 1843) to complete the crude canal. When the crops were in they began to build the Village of Dona Ana. These men's efforts shaped the history of Dona Ana County and they are responsible for the successful establishment of the town of Dona Ana and its farmland; creating the first agriculturally viable village in the Mesilla Valley. The Acequia Madre was the key to the ultimate settlement and development of the entire Mesilla Valley.

Heritage Award

The Heritage Award is given to a person or persons whose actions or deeds have contributed to the historical or cultural heritage of Dona Ana County and who is (are) not professional or a vocational historian.

2018 Heritage Award Recipient Dolores Archuleta

Dolores C. Archuleta was born and raised in an adobe home built in 1925 in the Mesquite Historic District. As a child, she thought everybody in Las Cruces lived in an adobe home where they didn't need air conditioning and used a wood burning stove to keep warm in the winter. This large adobe home still stands and may be unique in that her father, a Native American who spent his youth in government Indian schools, designed and built the house.

In 2001, after her election to the City Council, she joined a non-profit group called Las Esperanzas, whose mission is restoring and preserving homes in Mesquite Historic District. Her newly acquired knowledge about historic homes and sites, led her to get involved with the historic Amador Hotel. She remembers as a child, watching the ladies in beautiful dresses at the hotel's Pinto Bar. She was a major facilitator in getting the abandoned hotel transferred from the county to the city for a dollar. Today she serves on the Amador Hotel Foundation.

In 2014 and 2015, she was elected President of Las Esperanzas, Inc. where she helped gain recognition for many of the historic homes.

An area she is most passionate about is veterans affairs. She is chairperson for the Veteran's Memorial Wall, helps organize the Veteran's Day Parade, is on the Veteran's Advisory Board and works Honor Flights. If there is a ceremony honoring veterans, like the Candlelight Ceremony, she is usually helping to make it happen. She says she wants to insure the history of their sacrifice is not forgotten.



Pasajero Del Camino Real Award

This award is given to author(s) of a significant historical publication about events, persons, places or issues in Doña Ana County or the nearby area.

2018 Pasajero Del Camino Real Award Recipient

Jim Eckles for

Deming, New Mexico's CAMP CODY: A World War One Training Camp

Jim Eckles is known mainly for his historical research of White Sands Missile Range where he worked from 1977 until his retirement in 2007. He has published two books covering the history and stories behind the missile range and Trinity Site, where the first atomic bomb was tested. He was inducted into the White Sands Missile Range Hall of Fame in 2013.

When he traveled to Minneapolis in 2016 to give a talk on V-2 rockets and Trinity Site, he ate dinner with officials who were more interested in Camp Cody than rocket technology. Pleading ignorance, Eckles told them Camp Cody was never on his radar. When he got home, he started digging and was taken by the story of a World War One camp housing up to 30,000 men that stood on the north side of little Deming 100 years ago. Imagine Saturday night in downtown Deming.

One fascinating thing about the camp was Deming's attachment to it. Camp Cody was an economic atomic bomb for the community and they didn't want it to go away. Community leaders kept reading the tea leaves and hoping the camp would be turned into a permanent military facility. The newspapers were filled with wishful thinking. Unfortunately for Deming, three weeks after the war's armistice, the camp was ordered demolished. Almost nothing remains of the more than one thousand buildings/tents or the tens of thousands of men who passed through the camp. It turned out to be a two-year bubble in Deming's history.

At first, he anticipated a simple article for the *Southern New Mexico Historical Review*, but information kept popping up everywhere. The article, which was published in 2017, grew into this easy-reading book published later in the year.



The Gemoets Prize

This \$100 prize is awarded to the author of the “Outstanding Article” in the current issue of the Southern New Mexico Historical Review as determined by the Editor.

2018 Gemoets Prize Recipient

Eric Liefeld for

New Light on the Nestor Armijo House



Eric Liefeld is founder and current President of Mesilla Valley Preservation, Inc. — a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to preserving the architectural legacy of the Mesilla Valley. Eric is active in preservation advocacy, regional architectural research and attribution, and adobe technology and preservation best practices. As a native of Las Cruces, a graduate of New Mexico State University, and a resi-

dent of Mesilla, Eric is passionate about preserving our local history and cultural touchstones. When he’s not playing with mud, Eric works as a freelance writer in the technology industry.

Eric has been closely involved with the rehabilitation of the Nestor Armijo House since early 2009, acting as an informal preservation advisor and raising considerable financial support for the project. When work began on the the most recent rehabilitation, preservationists started with one of the most thoroughly documented buildings in Las Cruces. Surprisingly, a string of discoveries has enriched our understanding of the history and evolution of this remarkable building and its pioneering owners. Those discoveries are outlined in Eric’s article in the 2018 Southern New Mexcio Historical Review.



The Doña Ana County Historical Society (DACHS) was founded in 1963 to encourage and foster a better understanding of the County's far reaching history for future generations. Emphasizing research, education, and preservation, the society encourages a greater appreciation of New Mexico history, especially that of Doña Ana County.

Founding Members

John Altshool, Betty Bowen, Helen Caffey, Laiten Camien, Martin Campbell, Ira Clark, Adlai Feather, Louis Freudenthal, Dorothy Mechem, Hugh Milton, Thomas Mitman, Helen Shomer, David Streeter, J. Paul Taylor, and Mark Thompson