

SOUTHERN NEW MEXICO HISTORICAL REVIEW



J. CISTEROS '89

Pasajero del Camino Real

Doña Ana County Historical Society
Volume XVI Las Cruces, New Mexico January 2009

Doña Ana County Historical Society
Publisher

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The *Southern New Mexico Historical Review* (ISSN-1076-9072) is looking for original articles concerning the Southwestern Border Region for future issues. 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 an individual or individuals in marketing and distribution.

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Editor's Page

This issue of the *Southern New Mexico Historical Review* brings to our readers a variety of associations, institutions, and individuals all part of the historical mosaic of the Mesilla Valley. Frankie Miller tells the story of Monsignor Jean Grange of San Albino Church in Mesilla, one of a number of French priests who labored in the Lord's vineyards in Southern New Mexico.

I have often considered the idea of an issue of the review dedicated to a single theme. While this one does not fulfill that notion, it does feature an impressive concentration of scholarship dedicated to a single topic. Legal scholar Mark Thompson focuses on the role of President Benjamin Harrison and Judge A. A. Freeman in the history of Shalam Colony. Drawing on extensive research for an exhibit at the New Mexico Farm and Ranch Heritage Museum (NMFRHM), Cameron Saffell, and Christopher Schurtz delve deeply in to various aspects of Shalam Colony. Cameron and Christopher also provide a short "Myth Buster" related to the fascinating religious colony.

Frankie Miller does double duty in this issue. Frankie also contributed her homage to Mary Helen Daniels Taylor. As those who knew her can attest, Mary was certainly an outstanding and unique individual, but she was something of an institution as well. Countless scholars and other people with an interest in the history of the southern part of our state benefitted from her advice and willingness to share information.

Cameron Saffell also pulls off a double play with his institutional history of the NMFRHM. Cameron has been Curator of History at the museum since 1999 and thus is able to provide an insider's view of one of the most important cultural institutions in our part of the Land of Enchantment.

Stacie Pritchett, a student at New Mexico State University, studies several associations that were a vital force in "bringing civilization," as she puts it, to our Wild West community, principal among them the Women's Improvement Association of Las Cruces.

Walter Hines, shares the reminiscences of his first cousin, Elsie Carr, which he adapted from her memoir, "Elsie's Story." This is a loving recollection of life in the Mesilla Valley, beginning in 1915 and covering the period until the late 1930s.

A local murder mystery *Cricket in the Web*, penned by Las Cruces writer Paula Moore, is reviewed. And everyone loves a mystery. Some facts about fighting rangers and regulars from our neighbors to the east are laid bare in *Texas Devils*, which is also reviewed. Finally we have a review of *Feeding Chilapa*, a look at industrial evolution in Mexico.

This was to be my ninth—and last—issue as editor, and the review was to be placed in the more-than-capable hands of Nancy Shockley. As many of you know, Nancy has headed for the Far North to pursue her teaching dreams. That being the case, it will be my honor to serve for at least another year, so please keep those manuscripts coming.

Rick Hendricks
Editor

**MONSIGNOR JEAN GRANGE;
SAN ALBINO, MESILLA 1886-1929**

Frankie Miller

On 4 November 2008 the little church of San Albino in Mesilla, New Mexico became a Minor Basilica, a celebration of processions and masses that was attended by thousands of the faithful. Parishioners, Ron and Olivia McDonald researched tirelessly and prepared the formal documents to be submitted to the Vatican for consideration of their petition. Finally, on the birthday of Monsignor Getz, then the Pastor of San Albino, Bishop Ramirez called with the good news. This huge honor was witnessed by parishioners, visitors and many dignitaries, more than twelve hundred people sought seating in the church that holds but three hundred people. It would be fitting to pause and remember the French missionary priest who came to serve the Mesilla valley, never dreaming his little brick church would some day become a Minor Basilica. The corner stone of San Albino dedicated the new church in 1908 and named Father Jean (Juan) Grange as the builder of the church. The father, who stayed in Mesilla nearly fifty years, must have felt at home under the watch of the Organ Mountains; there was also a range of mountains called the *Orgues*, the French word for organ, in his native region of Auvergne, France.

Mesilleros have always known that their history and that of their San Albino is special, separate and different even from the history of St. Genevieve's in Las Cruces, only six miles away. Mesilla was established by a Mexican land grant on the Mexican side of the border following the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, which was signed on 2 February 1848. The town of Mesilla was colonized by Mexican patriots, who were offered land grants by Father Ramón Ortiz, a priest who represented the Mexican government as land

commissioner Father Ortiz, parish priest of El Paso del Norte, began distributing the land grant in what was to become Mesilla in 1851. Mesilla did not become part of the New Mexico Territory of the United States until the Gadsden Purchase in 1854 moved the southern border of the territory to include Mesilla.



Pastoral retreat for Tucson Diocese. Bishop Granjon, seated center front surrounded by the priests who attended the retreat.

Although Father Grange was absent from this photograph, Father August Morin, Grange's predecessor at San Albino is the slight man standing being the bishop's right shoulder Courtesy of the Tucson Diocesan

The first San Albino was a tiny *jacal*, hastily constructed on the west end of the plaza and it served as a temporary church until a better building could be constructed. The third San Albino, which Father Grange came to serve, was built in 1857, during the term of Father Jose de Jesus Baca. It was constructed of adobe and had only one tower. In 1886, Father Jean found himself to be in possession of a very poor church, with only a few pews. The meager purchases for the church, recorded in 1888 included: one pair *aranas* (2 *bices*), \$3.00 for San Albino, three pair of candlesticks with three lines worth \$15.75, three pairs of large candelabra with chimneys for lights worth \$15.60. Then, in 1890, he purchased "a statue of San Albino for processions," for \$13.75. The freight charges for the crate with the statue were \$13.00.¹

The present church of San Albino, the fourth structure, was dedicated in 1908 and was literally built over and around the existing adobe church. The new church was constructed around the old church and when it was complete; the adobe walls were torn down and carried out the front doors of the new building. The present Romanesque style brick building was built by Father Jean Grange, who, according to Mary Daniels Taylor, a local historian and mesillera, became completely "Mexicanized." Father Jean first appears in the records in 1875 where he is mentioned as the pastor of the La Mesa Church.² In ten years of serving the churches up and down the valley, Grange learned fluent Spanish. When Bishop Granjon of the Tucson Diocese made his pastoral visitation in 1902, he commented on Father Grange's fluency in Spanish. "Not very familiar with English, he speaks Castilian as if it were his mother tongue."³ From 1886 until his retirement in 1928, by then a monsignor, Jean Grange led the parishioners of Mesilla and surrounding communities through building projects for not only San Albino, but for San Miguel, retiring in the same community he had served for so many years.

Amelia Gamboa celebrated mass at the dedication of the new Basilica with the other mesilleros, and at the same time celebrated the part her church has played in her and her family's lives. Few people have seen as much history in their community as Amelia has. Amelia Lopez Gamboa, who is now approaching her hundredth birthday, was one of the first babies to be baptized in the newly dedicated San Albino, in 1908. Father Jean Grange baptized her in the new yellow brick, Romanesque style church that more resembled the churches of his native France than



This photograph of Father Jean Grange was part of Mary Daniels Taylor's personal research. Many personal artifacts belonging to Father Grange were left in the priests' home after his death in 1936 Courtesy of

the adobe San Albino that it had replaced. When asked if she remembered how people felt about the new church, she replied that people thought that it was beautiful and there were plenty of places to sit, but yes, some people still missed the old adobe church. What they really liked was the choir loft that was above and behind the congregation. She said that it was beautiful the way the singing and the music would come down over you. Amelia remembers her catechism classes under the strict Father Grange, “He was very strict; you had to listen, sit down and respect the church.”⁴ But in those days, she remembers, the parents were strict as well and you had better not have misbehaved in the church.⁵

Father Grange seemed to have been a priest who was familiar with children, teaching catechism and directing them, so that their comfort with him was evident to Bishop Granjon. During his 1902 visitation, the Bishop Granjon of Tucson mentioned the relationship that Grange had with the children of his parish. While the mass on the previous day at St. Genevieve’s in Las Cruces had been full of screaming, crying children, he said this of Father Jean and his children:

*While I prepare myself in the sacristy I hear Father Jean placing everyone in the church... ‘Little girls to the right and little boys to the left, and nobody move!’ says the voice, which wants to make itself gentle so as not to frighten, but which nails the youngsters in place. . .It is not that the children do not appear struck by terror at my approach, as they did the day before in Las Cruces, but this is a mute terror I hear distinctly the name that is to be given to each one confirmed, which father Jean indicates to me as we move along.*⁶

Father Grange had a housekeeper named Perla Alidib whom Amelia remembers as well. “Oh yes, she was very strict. Everybody liked her very much. She taught us good manners with visitors and everything.”⁷ Perla, too was instrumental in instructing the children

of the parish on how to behave in the rectory and in the church. Amelia could only remember that Perla was the father’s housekeeper for a very long time. She was in fact employed by the Monsignor, caring for him until his death in 1936. It was Perla who dedicated the shrine to Monsignor Grange, which is on the back of San Albino.

Father Grange also performed the wedding service for Amelia and her husband Eugenio



This shrine was built, on the outer wall at the back of the San Albino in remembrance of Monsignor Jean Grange, by his housekeeper Perla Alidib. Courtesy of San Albino Basilica, Mesilla.

(Pemo) Gamboa in 1929, the same year that Grange retired from San Albino. Amelia says that Father Grange was like a real father to the community because he knew about their problems and would talk to them and try to help.⁸ Father Grange served at San Albino through World War I and the Mexican Revolution, remaining in Mesilla through the depression. He had led his parish through many hard years and yet was remembered as fatherly by Amelia.

Amelia remembers that Father Grange still performed mass and gave catechism classes after his retirement. The Monsignor continued to live on the plaza in his territorial style adobe home until his death in 1936. The home is now known as the Barela-Reynolds-Taylor home, and will, in time, become a museum. Grange left his home to his housekeeper, Perla Alidib.⁹ After caring for Father Grange until his death, Perla opened a store front on the street in front of the residence. In her later years, Perla sold the home to Mary and Paul Taylor, after a frightening experience with a tenants' violent husband. She became afraid to deal with these problems in her old age, and offered her home to the Taylor's, who have made significant restorations and repairs to the home and have raised a family of seven children there.

Father Grange seemed to understand how important traditions were, how deeply rooted they were in the very relationship of the parishioners with their church. He continued to respect these traditions by taking part in them himself. He was, at his own request, Godfather to one of the Frieze babies. Although this practice was not uncommon, it was not encouraged by the church. It is another example of how involved father Grange was in the lives of his youngest parishioners. Among his first purchases were the fabrics for the linens for the vestments to make the church a special place of worship for the parishioners.

The huge task of building the new church was quite an undertaking for such a small parish. Amelia says that through their cooking, the women raised quite a bit of to help build the much needed church. All the members



This altar is one of a pair handcrafted by Jean Grange for the newly constructed San Albino. Note that the altar is decorated with a fleur de lies, reminiscent of his native France. Courtesy of the San Albino Basilica, Mesilla.



This washstand, hand crafted by Father Grange, was still in the home when the Taylors' purchased it from Perla Alidib. courtesy of Mary and J Paul Taylor

worked on the church when they were able to leave their fields to help. But Father Grange in a letter to Bishop Granjon, admitted that he had spent thousands of dollars of his own money. He also admitted his desire to build a place of worship to make the Protestants of Las Cruces envious.¹⁰

Father Grange was also a talented woodworker who constructed the matching altars that used to stand together at the front of San Albino. Today, one is at the head of the altar, and the other is in the crying room. The matching pair is decorated with carved fleur de lies, reminiscent of Granges' native France. Inside his former home, now the Taylor residence, there remain several examples of his craftsmanship. There is a washstand inside the doorway leading to the patio, often propping open the door to let in a stream of sunshine. There is an ornately carved nicho on the wall of the dining room, and another resides on the organ in the *oratorio* (family chapel). Both nichos hold figures of saints as they were intended to when Father Grange's hands lovingly crafted them.

And lest we think of Father Grange only as a religious, serious figure, there is one discovery that is especially amusing and insightful. On the day this researcher met Father Getz and was being admitted to photograph the interior of San Albino, there was a rectory full of parishioners who were excited about the projects they were working on.

When Father Getz told them about my research, they excitedly revealed that their Father Grange was quite a character. He had been a bootlegger during prohibition, making his own wine and selling it for fifty cents a bottle! He was, after all, a Frenchman. This is certainly not a story that would have been turned up in the diocesan archives.

We will probably never know what Father Grange expected when he volunteered to serve the Tucson Diocese in the wild Arizona-New Mexico Territory of

the United States. He most likely envisioned cowboys, cattle and wild Indians. What he found was tiny villages of subsistence farmers who although struggling to support their families, loved their faith and were devoted to it. It seems that he never returned to France after he accepted San Albino, and he remained there until his death in 1936. He was a



This nicho hangs on the dining room wall of the Barela-Reynolds-Taylor home. A similar nicho sits on the organ in the oratorio. Courtesy of Mary and J. Paul Taylor



These are the baretta worn by Father Grange, still in a hat box, hand labeled "Father Grange size 7 5/8". These were also in Mary Daniel Taylor's' Collection along with her own research. Courtesy of NMSULASE

wealthy man and could have returned home to retire, as a young cousin often asked him to in very sincere letters from France.¹¹ His friends in the priesthood, other Frenchmen serving in the southwest often went home to retire, or to be taken care of for illnesses, but it would seem that Jean Grange had adopted Mesilla as his home and would not leave.

Monsignor Jean Grange lies under the altar he built in the Church of San Albino. This is an old custom, no longer common by 1936, but a sign of great respect by the parishioners for their beloved priest. To be buried under the altar signified a great honor for the status of the deceased. Further, all the prayers said every day would wash over the soul of the one buried there. It is a beautiful Old World custom, from a distant day and time, a reminder of the Spanish colonial traditions of the New World, which is very fitting for Mesilla, even today. And this story, about one priest, is just a small part of what makes the Basilica of San Albino so special for everyone who visits and worships there.

Frankie Miller is a graduate student in the Public History Program at New Mexico State University. In 2008 she received the Mary and J Paul Taylor Scholarship in 2008 and was named Public History Graduate Student of the Year. Her thesis research concerning Father Jean Grange, was influenced by letters and records that Mary Daniels Taylor collected, which Frankie processed for Rio Grande Historical Collections during an internship in the Taylor home. Frankie is also researching the history of French priests in southern New Mexico with Dr. Claude Fouillade.

Endnotes

1 Papers of Mary Daniels Taylor, Rio Grande Historical Collections, New Mexico State University Library.

2 Henry Granjon, *Along the Rio Grande: A Pastoral Visit to Southwest New Mexico in 1902*, edited by Michael Romero Taylor, translated by Mary W. de Lopez (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1986), 131.

3 Granjon, 52.

4 Amelia Lopez Gamboa, interview by Frankie Miller, 11 July 2008.

5 Ibid.

6 Granjon, 54.

7 Ibid,

8 Amelia Lopez Gamboa interview.

9 Papers of Mary Daniels Taylor.

10 Letter to Bishop Granjon, Tucson Diocesan Archives.

11 Papers of Mary Daniels Taylor.

12 Martina Will de Chaparro, *Death and Dying in New Mexico* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2007).

**PRESIDENT BENJAMIN HARRISON,
JUDGE A.A. FREEMAN AND THE SHALAM COLONY:
A LEGAL AND POLITICAL HISTORY**

Mark Thompson

As the comprehensive bibliography in the Rio Grande Historical Collection of the New Mexico State University Archives shows, the nineteenth-century Shalam religious colony near Doña Ana is the subject of many fascinating stories.¹ Less often told, perhaps, is the story of litigation involving the colony, the legal and political fallout that may or may not have occurred as a result, and the surprising legacy of the New Mexico Supreme Court opinion ending the litigation.

The colony had become a reality by 1884² and in 1887 one of the disgruntled colonists sued, seeking money damages for wrongs committed by the leaders. Jessie Ellis alleged that John Newbrough and A.M. Howland had knowingly and falsely asserted: (1) that the property of the colony would be held in common; (2) that the community would be governed by brotherly love, without a leader; (3) that all members would have an equal, permanent place in the colony; and, (4) that the community was based on principles of sound morality and purity of life.³ Because he had relied upon these false statements, and because he also alleged that the defendants had not delivered on a promise of payment for his work, Ellis claimed he was entitled to \$10,000.00.

Represented by prominent Las Cruces lawyer, Simon Bolivar (“S. B.”) Newcomb, the defendants answered with a “demurrer,” a pleading that asks the court to dismiss the case on the grounds that, even if all the “facts” alleged are true, the plaintiff has not stated a proper (legal) “cause of action.” (In modern pleading terminology, the complaint “fails to state a claim upon which relief can be granted.”) The defense is important for understanding the legal issues involved in the case, something which gets lost in the entertaining appellate opinion. The district judge did not dismiss the case and, after a trial in May 1888, a jury awarded Ellis \$1,500.00. Because it was a “general verdict,” we will never know what part of Ellis’ claim the jury believed had been proved. The defendants appealed, but the matter languished in the Supreme Court until August 1891.

While the appeal was pending, Congress increased the number of New Mexico territorial judges by creating the 5th Judicial District.⁴ President Benjamin Harrison offered the position to the recently retired, long time Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives, Thomas B. Reed of Maine, who turned it down.⁵ In October 1890, A. A. Freeman, then in private practice in Washington, D.C. after a seven year term as an Assistant U. S. Attorney General, accepted the offer.⁶ At its creation, the district was comprised of Socorro, Lincoln, Chaves and Eddy counties. Much to the consternation of the southeastern New

Mexico lawyers, Socorro became the headquarters for Judge Freeman.⁷ Because the territorial judges served as both trial (district) judges as well as appellate (Supreme Court) judges, Freeman also took his place on the appellate court and was assigned the task of writing the opinion in the appeal of *Ellis v. Newbrough*.

Alfred Alexander Freeman was no legal or political novice. Born in Haywood County, Tennessee on 7 February 1838, he was admitted to the Bar at age twenty-one. A Union supporter during the Civil War, he was first elected to the state legislature in 1865. After an unsuccessful race as the Republican candidate for governor of Tennessee in 1872, he accepted appointment as U.S. Consul in Prague, but resigned the post after a few months. Returning to Tennessee he was again elected to the legislature in 1876, resigning the next year to take the position in the Justice Department in Washington.⁸



Alfred Alexander Freeman

The opinion of Judge Freeman, issued by the New Mexico Supreme Court on 19 August 1891, defies easy summary. Lee Priestly probably did the best job, calling it “ten rollicking pages of ridicule.”⁹ Judge Freeman, it can be argued, summarized the case thusly: “What the declaration [complaint] leaves as uncertain, the proof [evidence presented by the plaintiff] makes incomprehensible. *If the court below had been invested with spiritual jurisdiction*, it might have been enabled, *through an inspired interpreter*, to submit to a mortal jury the precise character of plaintiff’s demand.”¹⁰ As will be seen by later use of the opinion by other courts, judge Freeman could have skipped to the conclusion: “We are of the opinion that a proper cause of action was not set out in the declaration...and the judgment of the district court should be reversed.” Unfortunately, perhaps, he proceeded to mock the religion of the parties, thereby laying the foundation for the assertion that he so displeased President Harrison that he almost lost his job as a territorial judge.

Benjamin Harrison was certainly a straight-laced and proper lawyer; some persons apparently described him as the dullest personality ever to inhabit the White House. As a young man, he almost chose the ministry instead of law. He and his first wife Caroline both had a strong allegiance to the Presbyterian Church and he served as an Elder for almost forty years.¹¹ Consequently, it is easy to believe that he would find an appellate opinion mocking religion improper. But in 1948, the former librarian of the New Mexico Supreme Court, Arie W. Poldervaart, claimed that the President was so deeply disturbed that Freeman “nearly lost his place upon the court.”¹² A search for evidence of Harrison’s displeasure, an examination of the law governing territorial judges, and,

a review of Harrison's personal and political situation in 1891-92, leads me to doubt that Judge Freeman's job was truly in jeopardy.

How did President Harrison make known his displeasure with Judge Freeman? A study of how the Shalam colony was treated by the *Rio Grande Republican* does not mention the case or Judge Freeman's opinion¹³ and my own review of that and Santa Fe, Carlsbad and Albuquerque newspapers, limited to late 1891 and early 1892, turned up no stories. If the index of the Harrison papers is reliable, the President never wrote Judge Freeman, New Mexico Chief Justice James O'Brien or Governor L. Bradford Prince during that same period.¹⁴ Although the President and Secretary of State James Blaine often discussed political appointments, I found nothing in their correspondence between August 1891 and June 1892.¹⁵ None of this proves that Harrison did not in some way express his displeasure, but it might speak to the supposed notoriety of the whole affair.

Territorial judges were appointed by the president with the advice and consent of the senate but did not have lifetime tenure. They were known as "legislative judges," with whatever status and jurisdiction Congress chose to give them. As in Judge Freeman's case, they were usually appointed "for the term of four years, and until his successor is appointed and qualified."¹⁶ Their lack of constitutional status did not mean Congress was unconcerned about their judicial independence. The Act of Congress creating the territory of New Mexico, commonly known as the "Organic Act," provides a good example. The appointment of judges for four years is contrasted with the appointments of governor, secretary, U.S. Attorney and U.S. Marshall. These executive branch officers were appointed to a term of four years "unless sooner removed by the president of the United States."¹⁷ At least three U.S. Supreme Court Justices found this distinction significant, describing New Mexico as having judges appointed for an "absolute" four year term.

Even if Harrison did not seek a formal legal opinion on his authority to fire a territorial judge, he was undoubtedly aware of an opinion of the U.S. Supreme Court issued just three months before Judge Freeman's opinion in *Ellis*. President Cleveland had "suspended" Judge McAllister of Alaska pursuant to the Tenure of Office Act in July 1885. By the time the appeal reached the U.S. Supreme Court the statute had been repealed, but the court held that the Tenure of Office Act had indeed applied to territorial judges in 1885 and that Cleveland had acted lawfully.¹⁹ In addition, the court correctly noted that "[w]hat ever may be the powers of the president over territorial judges, now that [the Tenure of Office Act] is repealed, we need not now discuss." No other territorial judges gave the court the opportunity to discuss the issue, but in 1897 the court explained that *McAllister* held that "prior to the repeal of [the Tenure of Office Act, a territorial judge] was subject to removal before the expiration of his term of office."²⁰ Nevertheless,

at least one lawyer/law professor/historian asserts that, based upon *McAllister*, territorial judges were subject to removal at any time.²¹

Finely tuned legal arguments do not always prevail in a confrontation with political reality and the relationship of President Theodore Roosevelt with New Mexico territorial judges provides two examples. The first might be considered fairly straightforward: the firing of Benjamin Stanton Baker in 1904.

Baker, from Nebraska, was appointed by Roosevelt in December 1901 and was the resident judge in Albuquerque when he was abruptly dismissed in December 1904.²² Although he had apparently incurred the wrath of Governor Otero, and the *Albuquerque Journal* said his “passions and prejudices” were so strong they controlled his judgment, it was not entirely clear what brought about the removal.²⁴ Having apparently declined to resign quietly before the order was issued, Judge Baker was able to convince the President to retract the order of dismissal and he then resigned.²⁵

If the first example was simply “resign or be fired,” the second bordered on the bizarre. President McKinley had appointed Daniel Hugh McMillan of New York in December 1900 but by the fall of 1902 the Justice Department had opened an investigation of McMillan based upon allegations of “inappropriate” sexual activities.²⁶ A lengthy process followed, ending about 1 April 1903, with McMillan confident that he had refuted the case against him.²⁷ On 22 June 1903, Roosevelt announced that he had removed McMillan from office and appointed Clement C. Smith of Michigan to the position.²⁸ The new appointment caught the Attorney General, who apparently had his own favorite, by surprise and enraged Bernard Rodey, the territorial delegate to Congress, because Rodey wanted a New Mexican in the position.²⁹ In the meantime, former Judge McMillan, who had been removed “on a charge of general immorality,” appealed, not by filing a legal action but by attempting to have the U.S. Senate review the matter when it reconvened later in the year.³⁰ The Senate never took up the matter and on October DATE MISSING New Mexican William H. Pope was named to the judgeship, Rodey apparently prevailing over the President and the Attorney General.³¹

If the two “Roosevelt” cases confirm our suspicion that U. S. Presidents usually get their way, it seems ironic that Baker and McMillan get a pass from historians while the legend persists that Judge Freeman almost lost his job. Professor Poldervaart does not even mention Judge Baker or Judge McMillan in his history of the territorial court, much less discuss their “removal.” Professor Weihofen, in the “official” history of the United States Court of Appeals For the Tenth Circuit, does not say anything about the removal but does say that Baker was “eminently able” and that McMillan “showed solid integrity and a sound grasp of the problems presented by the cases” and also “had a strong sense of social responsibility...”³²

No doubt Benjamin Harrison could have demanded Judge Freeman's resignation, but his personal and political distractions during the period after the issuance of the *Ellis* opinion in August 1891 should raise doubts about the extent of his engagement on the Freeman matter. Benjamin's wife, Caroline, had been diagnosed with tuberculosis and he cut back on travel outside of Washington that fall.³³ During this time, with major foreign policy matters such as turmoil in Venezuela and Hawaii on his plate, his relationship with Secretary of State James G. Blaine deteriorated. Blaine resigned in June 1892, and challenged Harrison for the Republican Party nomination. Harrison won the nomination but because of Caroline's health he refused to campaign. His opponent, Grover Cleveland, out of respect, likewise did not campaign. Caroline died in late October, just days before the election won by Cleveland.

Judge Freeman served until his successor was appointed by President Cleveland and qualified for the office in early 1895, slightly more than his "absolute" four year term. Contrary to the assumption that he had made his home near his Socorro headquarters, Freeman had purchased land from John A. Eddy in the county named for the Eddy brothers in 1891.³⁴ In April of 1893, his daughter, Beatrix, married lawyer James O. Cameron in the Grace Episcopal Church in Carlsbad, then known as Eddy.³⁵ When his term as judge ended, Judge Freeman entered into the private practice of law with his son-in-law in Eddy.³⁶

Judge Freeman apparently enjoyed the respect of both the legal and political communities. He served as President of the New Mexico State Bar in 1900 and that year was appointed by Governor Otero to the "Blue Ribbon" committee of prominent New Mexicans sent to Washington to lobby against a bill that would have given the State of Texas effective control over the water of the Rio Grande River.³⁷ In 1904 Congress again created another territorial judgeship in New Mexico and Freeman was suggested for the position that eventually went to Las Cruces lawyer, Edward A. Mann.³⁸ That same year his son Hugh, who had recently joined the law firm, died in an accident on his farm.³⁹ In late 1907 the Freeman and Cameron families pulled up stakes and moved to British Columbia to engage in the lumber business.⁴⁰ Alfred Alexander Freeman died in Victoria, British Columbia on 27 March 1926.

Before considering the possible legacy of Judge Freeman's opinion in the Shalam case, it is necessary to state what it was not- "a leading case on the legal doctrine of estoppel," as claimed by Professor Poldervaart in 1948. First, it could not be leading because it has never been cited as authority on the estoppel principle by any appellate court. That fact is easily shown by reference to the Shepard's/McGraw Hill Citorator, used by lawyers since the early twentieth century to determine the subsequent history of appellate opinions.⁴¹ Second, the other three judges considering the case with Judge Freeman refused to concur in his opinion, joining only in the result, the reversal of the district court. In other words, it was not the opinion of "the court" and would not be

considered “precedent.”⁴² Third, the decision did not prevent recovery by Ellis based upon evidence of his conduct or silence, the definition of “equitable estoppel.” The court, i.e. all judges, held that his complaint was legally deficient and the case should have been dismissed at the outset. Yes, Judge Freeman did discuss the conduct of Ellis, saying that Ellis should have known better and that he was complicit in the “fraud.” But the Freeman comments are more than mere *obiter dicta*, i.e., comments not essential to the decision; they are satire.

History has made its judgment on the legacy of the opinion, however, and it is favorable. No less than five state courts have cited Ellis in dealing with legal actions raising a serious problem under the First Amendment to the United States Constitution: are the civil courts qualified to resolve theological or doctrinal issues in order to determine if a religious organization has breached a contract or committed a wrong against one of its members, employees or members of the general public?⁴³ Unless you are one of the persons claiming harm, most U.S. citizens are probably thankful that the courts have answered the question in the negative, adopting what has become known as the “church autonomy doctrine.”⁴⁴ Judge Freeman did not know the doctrine title, but he described it well, if poetically: “If the court below had been invested with spiritual jurisdiction, it might have been enabled, through an inspired interpreter, to submit to a mortal jury the precise character of plaintiffs demand.” It was not so invested and Mr. Ellis was shown to the courthouse door.

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Endnotes

¹ The bibliography compiled by Linda Blazer may be accessed online at archives.nmsu.edu

² “SHALAM. The Name of a New Colony Just Started Near Doña Ana,” *The Rio Grande Republican*, 11 October 1884, 1. See generally, Kathryn D. Stoes, *The Land of Shalam, New Mexico Historical*

Review 33 (January 1958): 1-23 and 33(April 1958): 103-27; Lee Priestley, *Shalam: Utopia on the Rio Grande, 1881-1907* (El Paso: Texas Western Press, 1988).

³ I have relied on both the Supreme Court opinion, *Ellis v. Newbrough*, 6 N.M. 181(1891), and Elnora W. Wiley, *Inside the Shalam Colony* (Los

Alamos, N. Mex.: privately printed, 1991), 57-60, for the description of the case in the district court.

4 Act of 10 July 1890.⁵ Albert T. Volwiler, *The Correspondence Between Benjamin Harrison and James G. Blain, 1882-1893* (Philadelphia: The American Philosophical Society, 1940), 127.

6 "Judge Freeman," *The Eddy Argus*, 1 November 1890,1.

7 "The Fifth Judicial District," *The Eddy Argus*, 1 August 1890,1.

8 "Judge A.A. Freeman," *The Eddy Argus*, 14 February 1891,1.

9 Priestly, note 2 *supra* at 23.

10 *Ellis v. Newbrough*, 6 N.M. at 184. (emphasis added).

11 Homer E. Socolofsky & Allan B. Spetter, *The Presidency of Benjamin Harrison* (University of Kansas Press, 1987), 7.

12 Arie W. Poldervaart, *Black-Robed Justice*, 23; *New Mexico Historical Review* (January 1948): 47-49. Subsequent writers rely on Poldervaart for this assertion and I have found no earlier claim in writing. See e.g., James K. Logan, ed., *The Federal Courts of the Tenth Circuit: A History* (Denver: U. S. G.P.O., 1992), 248 (chapter by Henry Weihofen).

13 Daniel Simundson, *Strangers in the Valley: The Rio Grande Republican and Shalám, 1884-1891*, *New Mexico Historical Review* 45 (July 1970): 197-208.

14 Library of Congress, *Index to the Benjamin Harrison Papers* (Washington, DC: G.P.O. 1964), 96, 217, 235.

15 Note 5, *supra*.

16 Note 4, *supra*, § 2. The first four of the three judgeships created after 1890, had four year appointments.

McMillan are short on details of his wrongdoing. Otero, whom historians usu-

17 Act of 9 September 1850. Compare

sections 10 and 12 with sections 3, 4 and 11. (Section references to the Organic Act as compiled with "historical documents" in the *New Mexico Statutes Annotated*, 1978 edition.) the three judgeships created after 1890, had four year appointments.

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17 Act of 9 September 1850. Compare sections 10 and 12 with sections 3, 4 and 11. (Section references to the Organic Act as compiled with "historical documents" in the *New Mexico Statutes Annotated*, 1978 edition.)

18 *Wingard v. United States*, 141 U.S. 201 (1891), Justice Field, joined by Justices Gray and Brown, dissenting. Justice Field thought the territorial organization acts trumped the Tenure of Office Act.

ally take with a "grain of politics," thought Roosevelt had "treated Judge McMillan shamefully."

19 *McAllister v. United States*, 141 U.S. 174 (1891). Judge McAllister had only sued for his unpaid salary, not for reinstatement. The case of the Washington territory judge, Wingard, who also lost his action for unpaid salary, was decided as a companion case to *McAllister* and was also controlled by the Tenure of Office Act analysis.

20 *Parsons v. United States*, 167 U.S. 324, 337 (1897). Parsons was the U.S. Attorney for the Northern and Middle districts of Alabama. The opinion is well worth reading for its history of the Tenure of Office Act and its use by Congress in the impeachment of President Andrew Johnson.

21 See e.g., Logan, ed., *10th Circuit History*, note 12 *supra* at p. 12. (chapter by Paul E. Wilson).

22 "JUDGE BAKER REMOVED BY ORDER OF THE PRESIDENT. Friends Say Order is Severe Surprise," *The*

- Albuquerque Morning Journal*, 10 December 1904, 1.
- 23 Miguel A. Otero, *My Nine Years as Governor of the Territory of New Mexico, 1897-1906* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1940), 328.
- 24 "WILL BE NO HEARING IN BAKER CASE. Rodey Informed That Matter Is Closed," *The Albuquerque Morning Journal*, December 11, 1904, 1.
- 25 "JUDGE BAKER ALLOWED TO RESIGN FROM OFFICE," *The Albuquerque Morning Journal*, 20 December 1904, 1.
- 26 Otero, note 23 *supra* at 327. Keeping with the tradition of the time, the newspaper articles on territorial judges in New Mexico, as well of ²⁷ "He Has Not Resigned," *Albuquerque Journal-Democrat*, 9 April 1903, 5.
- 28 "MILLAN'S HEAD FALLS," *Albuquerque Journal-Democrat*, 23 June 1903, 1.
- 29 "Rodey Makes Stormy Kick," *Albuquerque Journal-Democrat*, 25 June 1903, 5.
- 30 "WILL APPEAL TO THE SENATE. Judge McMillan Disappointed With Decision of Department of Justice," *Albuquerque Journal-Democrat*, 26 June 1903, 1.
- 31 "Judge William H. Pope of Santa Fe Selected by President Roosevelt For Supreme Bench in New Mexico," *The Albuquerque Morning Journal*, 8 October 1903, 1. Bernard Rodey, following Judge Pope's death, took credit for the appointment. "A Friend's Tribute to the late Judge Pope," *Santa Fe New Mexican*, 17 September 1916, 4.
- 32 Logan, cd., 10th Circuit History, note 12 *supra* at p.256.
- 33 Socolofsky & Spetter, note 11 *supra* at p. 92.
- 34 "Eddy County Deeds," *The Eddy County Genealogical Society, Peas Trails (Vol. 7, 1987)*, 32.
- 35 "Book A-1, Records of Eddy County," *The Eddy County G. S., Peas Trails (Vol. 1, 1981)*, 82.
- 36 "Professional Card: Freeman & Cameron," *The Eddy Weekly Current*, 16 May 1895, 3.
- 37 Miguel A. Otero, note 23 *supra*, at p. 28. Doña Ana County lawyers, S. B. Newcomb, A.B. Fall and W.H.H. Llewellyn were also members of the committee.
- 38 "Freeman Endorsed. Roswell Bar Favors Him for Judge of the New District," *The Carlbad Argus* 6 May 1904, 2.
- 39 "Conquering Death Summons Hugh Freeman," *ibid* at p. 4. The other Freeman son, Elmore, died by suicide in 1903. "By His Own Hand," *The Carlbad Argus*, 9 October 1903, 1.
- 40 "The New Law Firm: Judges Grantham and Dye Form Law Partnership and Succeed Freeman, Cameron & Fullen," *The Carlbad Argus*, 14 February 1908, 2. See also, James Oscar Cameron household, 1911 Census of Canada, British Columbia population schedule, Victoria District 13, subdistrict 14, page 12, dwelling 112, family 114; microfilm ed., Library & Archives of Canada, Ottawa.
- 41 The only opinion citing *Ellis v. Newbrough* for something close to "estoppel," was by a court of appeals in Illinois which used *Ellis* for the proposition that some statements are of such an improbable sort that a reasonable person is not entitled to rely on them. *Mother Earth, Ltd. v. Strawberry Camel, Ltd.*, 390 N.E. 2d 393, 405 (111 App. 1979).
- 42 *Cf.*, *Chadwick v. Public Serv. Co. of N.M.*, 105 N.M. 272, 274 (Ct. App. 1986).
- 43 *State v. Atrana Society*, 109 N.W. 594 (Iowa 1 906); *Williams v. Johnston*, 1 04 N.W.789 (Ark. 1907); *Ruse v. Williams*, 130 Pac. 887 (Ariz. 1913); *State ex rel. Chamberlain v. Hutterische Bruder Gemeinde*, 191 N.W. 635 (S.D. 1922); and, *Seventh Elect Church in Israel v. First Seattle Dexter Horton Nat. Bank*, 10 P.2d 207 (Wash. 1932).
- 44 *Celnik v. Congregation B'Nai Israel*, 139 N.M. 352 (Ct. App. 2006). It should not be a surprise, given the history discussed above, that the *Ellis* opinion was not recognized as a prior New Mexico case on the subject.

SHALAM COLONY: DREAM IN THE DESERT

Christopher Schurtz and Cameron L. Saffell

A century before the hippies of the Age of Aquarius established communes in the hills outside of Taos and Santa Fe, a similar group of long-haired, tar-fixated idealists came to New Mexico to create the Territory's first major communal society. They called themselves Faithists and were led by their own charismatic prophet, who claimed spirits had guided his hands to produce the sect's 900-page new age bible. In the winter of 1884 the group of two-dozen men, women, and children pitched their tents on a scrappy piece of land eight miles north of what was then the small town of Las Cruces.

Most of them came with sincere intentions to implement the vision of the "Land of Shalam," a socialistic society depicted within their bible *Oahspe*. The plan was to make Shalam a place where all property was held in common, where a diet free of intoxicants and animal products was pursued, where no one was paid to work and all contributed equally to the success of the colony. Shalam was also to be an agrarian community that took in unwanted babies or orphans to be raised under the strict edicts of *Oahspe*. The group's unquestioned leader, John B. Newbrough, predicted Shalam would one day boast thousands of enlightened inhabitants, hanging gardens and grand walkways, libraries, music halls, and fields and orchards bursting with bounty.

The Shalam colony never fulfilled this ambitious vision. Not

unlike the New Mexico communes that would come later, Shalam would fall apart within a few years due to internal strife, charges of duplicity and hypocrisy, and a string of simple bad luck and timing. In the process of trying, however, the colony did adopt as many as thirty babies, and it pioneered several progressive agricultural methods not previously used in New Mexico Territory. It also, in the process, inspired its own collection of myths and misconceptions about the nature of the colony and the people who lived there.

While the dream in the



The Shalam Colony ca. 1885. The Shalam colonists lived in tents for more than a year. Notice the small adobe building upper right that served as a temple. Photo Courtesy of Archives and Special Collections Department, New Mexico State University, Ms337, RG93-



The Fratenum was the first major structure built made of adobe, it featured 40 dorm rooms, a library and steam laundry. Photo Courtesy of Archives and Special Collections Department, New Mexico State University RG89-2618.

desert was never fully realized, it foretold of agricultural innovations that would eventually reach the Mesilla Valley. Few took up Shalam's example in using a steam-powered tractor, mostly because the awkward machines did not work well in New Mexico soil. That changed in the 1940s as farmers adopted gas-powered tractors that deep-plowed the soil. Valley residents observed Howland's irrigation system with awe. Many installed windmills after he showed they could be effective, but few had the money, or the desire, to put in such large and expensive well-fed farms. Today farmers use deep wells mostly to supplement their water allotment from the Rio Grande.

With the deep faith and deep pockets of Andrew Howland, Shalam Colony suffered for nothing and enjoyed the latest and best technologies. His innovative irrigation system perhaps would have been a model for others had the Elephant Butte project not occurred. Shalam also proved to have a lasting influence in the memories of nearby Doña Ana, who still recall "La Colonia" with great fondness—both for its residents and the economic support it engendered. The Shalam colonists were all "characters" of oddities and eccentricities with bold personalities, but it is perhaps Howland who was the most unique. His sincere belief that he was doing Jehovah's work on earth in helping save orphans from an otherwise lost existence, combined with his willingness and wealth to throw at any problem or obstacle, helped carry Newbrough's unique vision as reality for a quarter of a century. While the dream was a noble failure, it leaves New Mexico with a unique story in the annals of communal agricultural history.

Origins of Faithism and Shalam (1881-1884)

Shalam Colony had its roots in the wave of spiritualism that had swept the United States and Europe since the mid-1800s. Spiritualism, essentially a belief in the ability to communicate with either spirits or the dead, was more than a fad. For a time, it was a significant religious movement that influenced the creation of more than a hundred communal or utopian experiments in the late nineteenth century. Some groups were more religious oriented, while others focused attention on social ills that were becoming commonplace in the growing industrial cities.¹

One committed spiritualist was dentist John Ballou Newbrough. A native of Ohio, Newbrough spent time as a miner in California and Australia before marrying and setting up a dental practice in New



Shalam's irrigation system was one of the largest in the Southwest. In addition, this windmill system ca. 1900, fed water to the buildings and garden. Photo Courtesy of Archives and Special Collections Department, New Mexico State University, Ms03830013

York City about 1860. He also had written five books, ranging from a treatise on dentistry to romantic Western novels. According to Newbrough, on 1 January 1881, he was told by spirits to buy a typewriter and then his hands were guided by them over the next year to produce a 900-page new age bible called *Oahspe*.² Complex and dense, the book offers a 78,000-year history of the Earth and its various spirits and prophets, using names and places described in the texts of other major world religions, biblical imagery, and an invented language called Paneric.³ It also addressed social problems, including the plight of orphans. Newbrough anonymously published *Oahspe* the following year.

Readers and critics disparaged the book as daunting and indecipherable.⁴ However, it rang true for a small number of people who gathered in New York in November 1883 to create the first Faithist Lodge of *Oahspe* and to name Newbrough chief, or “Tae.” Among those drawn to Faithism was a young woman named Frances Vandewater. Her previous background is unclear—several historians contend she was a dental aide in Newbrough’s office. At some point, Vandewater and Newbrough—now estranged from his wife—became romantically involved. Sent away when she became pregnant, she eventually returned to the group in January 1884 with a child named Justine Newbrough’s illegitimate and initially unacknowledged daughter. As the Lodge’s plans unfolded, Newbrough declared Frances to be the “Mother of Shalam” and Justine was described symbolically as the first orphan.

While many of the initial converts were from New York, “*Oahspe*” drew believers from other areas of the East Coast. The most important was Andrew Howland, a wealthy wool merchant from Boston, who learned of “*Oahspe*” through his readings of spiritualism.⁵ He befriended Newbrough and became a Faithist convert. Howland was enthralled with the concept of the “Children’s Land of Shalam” described in “*Oahspe*” and agreed to finance the building of a Faithist colony. In the end, no other Faithist would give more to Shalam than Andrew Howland.



Frances Newbrough Howland was known as “the Mother of Shalam,” and was crucial in the care of the orphans. Photo Courtesy of Archives and Special

Founding of the Shalam Colony

In summer 1884, the Faithists met in rural New York to form a colony that they hoped would become Jehovah’s kingdom on earth.⁶ Mostly educated adults, the group included a couple of families and one celebrity—nutritionist Dr. Henry Tanner, who gained fame in 1880 after undergoing a forty-day fast. The Faithists sought to implement the “Land of Shalam” described in “*Oahspe*,” where all property would be held in common, governance would be by the group as a whole, and where the diet would be strictly vegetarian (vegan).⁷

While the Faithists gathered in New York, Newbrough and Joseph Grill, a 25-year old bachelor from New York, traveled the Southwest by train looking for a site.⁸ In Las Cruces, he met a fellow Mason named John Barncastle, who told him of a site he owned at a bend in the Rio Grande a mile west of Doña Ana. He soon arranged for the purchase of the 500-acre tract with funds provided by Howland.⁹ In October 1884 the first group of about two-dozen people journeyed to New Mexico Territory by rail to take up residence, living in tents. The isolated parcel at first seemed full of promise, but they soon found out it had many problems. Though adjacent to the river, the colony could not legally dam the Rio Grande to raise it up, and it was a mile from the nearest irrigation ditch, which sat on the other side of the Santa Fe railroad line. The river's flow was erratic, either flooding or drying up in the summer. The bosque land also had to be cleared to build their facilities and farms, but the colonists found that their limited knowledge (most were urbanites) hindered their ability to become established.

Their new neighbors from Doña Ana proved invaluable to Shalam. They taught the Easterners how to make adobe bricks and about local crops and foods. The religious nature of Shalam, which they called "La Colonia," was apparently of little concern to the mostly Catholic village.

The colony employed several dozen people to help build colony's buildings, including the Fraternum, a sweeping one-story adobe with 40 dorm rooms, courtyard, a library, and steam laundry. With Howland's financial backing, money was of little concern. The *Rio Grande Republican* reported on 25 April 1885, that the colonists "are expending considerable money and are constantly busy improving the place, as they are introducing many new methods of farming and making innovations in the old manner of cultivating in the Rio Grande."



The Internal courtyard of the Fraternum. Note the small child playing at the end of the walkway. Photo Courtesy of Archives and Special Collections Department, New Mexico State University RG89-2620.

Conceptually, the colony was to be a diverse community with a mix of professions. In later years, the grounds included facilities for a blacksmith, shoemaker, carpenter, and poultry and dairy operations. Newbrough did not necessarily see agriculture as Shalam's primary industry. That said, Shalam's first major project in addition to erecting its first small adobe homes and a temple were to cultivate raisin grapes. Newbrough brought in 40,000 grape vines from California, and installed the first steam pump to raise river water into primitive ditches. In January 1885 the Faithist council purchased what the newspaper described as a \$2,800 "steam plow" to support their efforts.¹⁰

But farming at Shalam seemed doomed to fail. The steam pump gave out, despite early promise, and all of the grape vines died. The “steam plow” was abandoned in 1886—reportedly because it did not work well in the sandy bosque soils, or likely because it was too complicated to operate and maintain. Another problem was the colonists themselves. Initially, Newbrough wrote a friend in 1885 that everyone was happily working away. But that spirit apparently became scarce as the harsh existence at Shalam set in. Many simply did not expect to work so hard or thought that the rewards (real or spiritual) would be greater. And others began believing Newbrough was not what he said he was. Thus, within a few months dissension began, and some colonists left for other pursuits.

Scandals and Lawsuits (1885-1888)

When they first arrived in 1884, local residents and newspaper editors (particularly at the *Rio Grande Republican*) welcomed the newcomers, even with their eccentric ways and odd religion. By spring, however, some of the founding colonists were leaving and publicly alleging that Newbrough ran the colony like a despot. The attempts at farming had failed, and the colony had adopted no orphans. One departed member characterized Newbrough himself as a villainous, hypocritical scam artist who had duped the well-meaning colonists into supporting his phony scheme.¹¹ Colony leaders responded to the charges, but the criticisms stuck and made its way into other articles published by newspapers around the country. The local good will diminished, and by late 1885 the *Rio Grande Republican* regularly referred to Shalam as “a colony of cranks.”

The colony’s peak population was its first winter, when as many as forty- three people lived there.¹² Yet, with dissatisfaction rampant, several colonists left, while others were sent away over the next year. In 1886 three of the men, including founding trustee Jesse Ellis, sued Newbrough and Howland. While a local jury found in favor of Ellis in May 1888, the New Mexico Supreme Court overturned that ruling in 1891. But the damage was done. The public charges and trial coverage firmly established negative reputations for Newbrough and Shalam.

By the end of 1886, there were no more than twelve colonists at Shalam, including Newbrough, Frances and her daughter, and the recently arrived Howland.¹³ Increasingly, the colony relied on outside laborers from Doña Ana. It was a symbiotic relationship. The *Rio Grande Republican* reported “The advent of this community has been hailed as a blessing to the people of Doña Ana. They are paid one dollar a day, and the distribution of such an amount of funds in this slow going town has been something heretofore unheard of.”¹⁴ Between 1884 and 1907 as many as two hundred people from the village were employed at Shalam Colony. Then and in more recent times, Doña Ana residents

saw Shalam in economic terms in helping save the village, while generally ignoring Shalam's peculiar religion and eccentric practices. Howland, frequently seen in the village dressed in white, was fondly thought of, both at the time and in years afterward.

Gathering the First Orphans and the Death of Tae (1887-1891)

After divorcing his first wife the previous year, in 1887 Newbrough married Frances Vandewater Sweet in a ceremony at Shalam.¹⁵ Shortly afterward they left for New Orleans to live in a large house that Howland purchased to serve as “an orphan asylum.” A sign was posted outside the parlor saying “Wanted babies. No questions asked,” and more than once, they woke to find a baby left in the parlor. From this base, Newbrough published *The Castaway*, a circular that promoted the colony and the care of orphans. He also wrote a new addition to *Oahspe* describing Levitica, a conceptual idea for a community of non-Faithists who supported the goals of Shalam.



The Children's Home served as the main residence, and later as a barn. It was torn down in 1974. Photo Courtesy of Archives and Special Collections Department, New Mexico State University, RG89-2617.

Over the next two years, the Newbroughs adopted thirteen orphan infants. As a cholera outbreak spread (which killed three of the babies), they returned to Shalam in late 1889. Newbrough, and later in the 1890s Frances and Howland, made trips to other major cities, including St. Louis, San Francisco, Chicago, and Kansas City seeking additional waifs. Only a handful of colonists, including several non-Faithists, came to Shalam during the 1890s, to care for the orphans as teachers or nurses. In all, the Shalam Colony adopted as many as thirty babies between 1888 and 1900, at least four of whom died.¹⁶

Each child was given a new name and identity drawn from “Oahspe” to mark their fresh start with a new existence—names like Pathodices, Havralogssasor, Ardiatta, and Whaga. Though most of the children were Anglo, ethnicity was not a consideration. The group included two African-Americans, a Mexican-American, and possibly a Chinese-American. Like the adults, the children were fed a vegetarian diet, but were given milk and cheese until they were age six (for the extra protein). They bathed at least once a day and had many things for their amusement, including rocking horses and tricycles, which they were expected to share equally. They dressed in plain white linen frocks or loose-fitting gowns. In 1893 one observer described them “as healthy and good-natured a set of children as we ever saw.”¹⁷

In the late 1880s the final buildings at Shalam, including the Studio (built as Newbrough's spiritual retreat) and the Children's Home, were constructed of red brick fired near Shalam. A spacious building with high ceilings made of Texas pine, the Children's Home had several side bedrooms for the children, and a large "children's hall" where most indoor activities took place. For the rest of the time people lived at Shalam Colony, the new Children's Home served as the main residence for the orphans and the Howlands. By 1890, though, only a few colonists remained.

Howland and Newbrough spent 1890 working daily on a revised edition of "Oahspe," one that would include paintings done by Newbrough and pictures of the original ten orphans. The next year, Howland returned to Boston and New York to arrange for the publication of the new edition. That spring, an influenza epidemic struck throughout the Mesilla Valley, including the Shalam Colony. Most of the children, Frances, and Justine got sick, though it is unknown if any of the orphans died. Weakened by illness and the effort caring for the others, John Newbrough died 22 April at age sixty-three.¹⁸ Newbrough was buried with full Faithist and Masonic rituals in a small graveyard at Shalam.

After years of blasting the colony and Newbrough, the *Rio Grande Republican* eulogized him as "a most earnest, patient worker in the sect known here as the Shalamites and his death has made a vacancy in the ranks of this organization most difficult to fill and is deeply regretted by them."¹⁹ With Newbrough's death a decision had to be made as to whether to continue on. Howland promptly concluded his work back East publishing the 1891 edition of *Oahspe* and returned to Shalam as its de facto leader. At that point only he and a handful of Faithists remained.

The Howland Years (1891-1901)

In the years immediately following Newbrough's death, there is little mention of Shalam in the newspapers. It was clear, however, that Howland felt the colony's survival lay in agriculture, and he would spend hundreds of thousands of dollars trying to make it happen. By the fall of 1893, he cleared an additional 300 acres of bosque and desert land and installed one of the first large well-fed farms in New Mexico. Based around a one-acre, five-foot deep reservoir basin lined with asphalt, Howland tapped into the shallow underground water table, instead of the river, for his water supply.

A municipal-sized steam pump, purchased in Holyoke, Massachusetts, was capable of filling half of the 2,000,000-gallon capacity of the reservoir a day. Once filed, the same pump sent water into ditches or a series of underground pipes connected to outlying fields and orchards. Closer to the buildings, Howland installed seven windmills that filled two 50,000-gallon tanks, which fed indoor pipes and the gardens around the main buildings. According to the 1900 U.S. Census, the



Andrew Howland, *Shalam* financier, pictured ca. 1900. Howland wore this distinctive white Chinese pajama outfit for years. Photo Courtesy of Archives and Special Collections Department, New Mexico State University, RG89-2609.

Shalam system was one of the largest in the Southwest. He also erected stalls, corrals, and extensive steam-powered workmen shops. The *Rio Grande Republican* extolled the innovations, and predicted that Howland had “set an example that might possibly be followed with profit by others.”²⁰

Howland then filled many acres with fruit trees, alfalfa, and traditional grain crops.²¹ Despite his investments, most of these failed within a few years. Small animals and insects ate vines and tree bark, but the final blow was heavy frosts in 1896 and 1897 that killed fruit trees throughout the Mesilla Valley. Howland, who avidly read up on local agricultural trends, also tried one of the latest agricultural developments, canaigre—a perennial herb whose roots could be processed into a substance to tan leather. The crop was hyped locally, and Howland planted fifty tons of seeds over thirty-five acres. But the market bottomed out just as his first crop ready for harvest, and he plowed it under at a significant loss.

But the market bottomed out just as his first crop ready for harvest, and he plowed it under at a significant loss.

In 1893 Howland and Newbrough’s widow Frances decided to marry. Rumors of “free love” and malicious gossip, which first arose in the mid-1880s with the discord at Shalam, came to light again after Newbrough’s death, possibly prompting the couple to marry. Their marriage was apparently strong, lasting until their deaths twenty years later, and focused on the Faithist mission to raise and support the orphans. In later years, the couple actually gained considerable respect within social circles in Las Cruces, and Shalam became a popular picnic spot for locals.

But Howland was also seen as eccentric. In addition to being known as a tireless worker in the fields, Howland was also known during this period for his unusual clothing: “His shoes are of white canvas and he wears no stockings. The pantaloons are large and flowing, confined at the waist we know not how for the shirt hangs outside this garment is made after the Chinese fashion, and is fastened by hooks. The collars and sleeves are conspicuous by their absence and no hat covers the locke of hair which hangs below the shoulders. Yes a crank certainly but a fool no. A pleasant talker, well informed, and a sharp businessman.”

Levitica, 1893-1897

Among Howland’s efforts to support the colony was to enact Newbrough’s vision called Levitica, essentially an off-shoot of Shalam. Located on the colony lands a half a mile northeast of the main complex,

Levitica tried to attract new workers and supporters without expecting them to be Faithist converts. Howland built twenty semi-furnished homes with indoor plumbing on half-acre lots planted with apple trees and garden space, plus farming acreage nearby. No rent was charged, but in exchange residents were to live as vegetarians, avoid intoxicants of any kind, and not operate a retail business. Those “who live by their wits, such as politicians, lawyers, preachers, etc.” were specifically prohibited.²² No wages were to be paid, but one-tenth of the earnings were to go to support the orphans. Howland also opened a common store to provide discounted goods to the colonists and his local workers.

An estimated two-dozen people tried living at Levitica, including an initial group who came from Denver in the spring of 1894. By all historical accounts Levitica mostly attracted people willing to freeload but not work. Within a couple of years, Howland considered the effort a failure, and evicted the remaining residents. Shortly afterward a flood washed away most of Levitica.

The End of Shalam Colony

After the failure of the crops and the Levitica experiment, and with his fortune rapidly depleting, Howland was desperate to find something profitable. His next endeavor was the purchase of milking equipment and cream separators to support a large milk, butter, and cheese enterprise. In 1898 he imported what is believed to be the first purebred Guernsey dairy herd to New Mexico, bringing a rich, butterfat milk for his products and breeding stock that he sold to other interested dairy producers in the region. For a time he maintained a milk depot on Mesa Street in El Paso, but found the overall cost of the dairy operation too expensive.

Howland also put in a poultry operation, though it is a little unclear if it was only to produce eggs or also to raise chickens. Whichever the case, the effort failed—possibly because the broiler chickens froze to death when a heater was mistakenly left off during a cold night.²³ In addition, many cattle and chickens were stolen. The Faithist (and Howland’s native Quaker) religion did not believe in reporting or prosecuting theft, so the livestock may have proven an easy target.²⁴

By late 1900 Howland was losing between \$700 and \$1000 a month farming and operating Shalam. He knew he would not realize the vision of Shalam, having spent most of his \$300,000 fortune to build and run it—the equivalent of more than seven million dollars today. Though he had paid for the land and all improvements, Howland had given everything to the orphans in trust. In 1901, he was forced to sue them to rescind the trusteeship and regain clear title to the land.

Reluctantly, Frances searched for new homes where they could send the adopted children, who by then ranged in age from three to fourteen years old. Ten each went to orphanages in Dallas in Denver,

while two went to the Tuskegee Institute. Several of the original New Orleans orphans, who went to Dallas, died within a year of various stomach ailments—perhaps related to the change in diet from the Faithist vegetarianism. Some ran away from their new homes, a couple trying to return to Shalam. The Howlands kept three of the original girls (Nin, Ral, and Fifi) and one boy (Thouri, the only child born in Las Cruces), because of their closeness to Justine. The formal colony period ends with the disbursement of the orphans in 1901.

Howland had to work as hard to sell the Shalam Colony lands as he did trying to keep the dream alive. The family of seven continued to live in the Children's Home, with Andrew peddling milk, butter, and cheese from his wagon on the streets of Las Cruces and Doña Ana. Several land deals fell through, including one with irrigation promoter Nathan Boyd shortly before the federal government took over his project—the eventual building of Elephant Butte Dam. In 1906 Howland formed a partnership with four Las Cruces businessmen to subdivide and sell the colony farmlands under a corporation called the “Shalem Planting Company.”²⁵ Prospective residents could buy small parcels and get their water from Howland's massive central irrigation system, but there were no takers in the year the company existed.

Finally in 1907 a group of investors came up with \$60,000 to buy Shalam. The Howlands packed their remaining belongings (most having been crated two years earlier when the deal with Boyd had been brokered) and moved away forever. They lived for about a year in California before returning to El Paso. The Howland children all stayed in the region. Daughter Justine, who briefly attended New Mexico A&MA in 1900, married William B. Williams of El Paso in 1917 and had three children. She divorced him in the mid-1930s and changed her name to Jone Howland—a derivative of her father's first and step-father's last names.²⁶ The three orphan girls all married locally.²⁷ There are conflicting accounts about Thouri, who took the name Archie Brandon; he apparently ran away but stayed in touch with the Howlands over the years.²⁸



Justine Newbrough, also known as Jone Howland, she inherited the legacy of Shalam and Oahspe, Photo Courtesy of Archives and Special Collections Department, New Mexico State University, RG89-2604.

With the sale of the colony lands, Andrew and Frances Howland were not completely destitute. Interestingly, the Howlands continued to buy land in El Paso and around the Mesilla Valley, eventually owning almost 460 acres of land in Hatch and Mesilla Park. In 1916 Andrew inherited an estimated \$10,000 when the massive Howland whaling estate was distributed after his cousin, Hetty Green, died.²⁹ They lived their remaining years in comfort in an El Paso home. According to Jone Howland, they rarely if

ever referred to *Oahspe*, though they maintained a belief in New Thought. Andrew died in 1917, and Frances passed away in 1922.

Postscript

Heir to the Faithist materials, Jone Howland [the former Justine Newbrough Williams] was apparently always conflicted about her family's legacy. At various times, she claimed to have either lost or burned the original paintings and *Oahspe* manuscript, or that they were destroyed in an El Paso flood. She retained the printing plates to *Oahspe* until the 1930s, when she sold them to another Faithist, Wing Anderson, who later interviewed her in March 1960, in the only recorded interview of a Shalam resident.³⁰ After her mother's death, Howland arranged for her father to be removed from the Shalam graveyard and reinterred in the Masonic Cemetery in Las Cruces. Howland mostly rejected *Oahspe* as "a load of bunk," yet she maintained belief in numerology and spiritualism. She and her three children moved to California in 1938, where she remained until her death in 1973.

The Shalam Colony lands passed through many hands, particularly in the first couple of decades after the Howlands moved on. This was largely a result of speculation and farming expansion resulting from the Elephant Butte Dam project, which was announced around 1906 and completed in 1916. Ironically, the land that Howland found so difficult to farm is today considered prime farming real estate. Much of the property is now owned by a couple of families. The main Shalam complex, including the original buildings survived into the 1940s. The Fraternum at times housed seasonal farm laborers until a flood washed away most of the structure. Over the years, most of the facilities disintegrated or were torn down. The Children's Home was used as a barn before it was torn down in 1974. Today only the Studio building— itself in very poor condition—and parts of the reservoir well remain as the only constructed remnants of the Shalam Colony.³¹

Only a few artifacts associated with Shalam are known to still exist. One— an ox yoke reportedly used at the colony—was donated to the Farm and Ranch Museum several years ago. Another is the temple bell, which was purchased by the Catholic Church in Doña Ana. Today it hangs in the tower of the historic Nuestra Señora de la Candelaria Church. It is likely many of the furnishings and materials from Shalam ended up scattered around the valley and into people's homes. A roadside marker on North Valley Drive was erected in 2004 to commemorate the colony's existence, as does part of the old road through the property, today called Shalem Colony Trail.³²

Unlike the colony, the Faithist religion still exists. Several groups have reprinted *Oahspe* over the decades, as well as other newsletters and information about Faithism, their bible, and its Kosmon calendar. Although there is only one known Faithist congregation (in England), a few hundred believers keep the faith and share research about

spiritualism and the Shalam Colony. Among them were Jim Dennon and Linda Blazer, who constituted part of the Oahspe Research Group in the 1980s and 1990s. They conducted the most in-depth research, including attempting to track down what came of all the orphan children and Howland's descendants. Much of their research, which Blazer assembled at the Rio Grande Historical Collections at NMSU, where she worked as a librarian, was critical to the museum's research work for this project. Today's most visible outlet of Faithism and the old colony site is the Shalam Colony & Oahspe Museum in Mesilla, led by its founder and director LesLee Alexander.

Clearing up myths and misconceptions was one of the results of the research that went into developing the New Mexico Farm and Ranch Heritage Museum's exhibit "Shalam Colony: Dream in the Desert." Unlike previous accounts, the museum's focus was not on the religious aspects of Shalam, but its agricultural activities. Shalam Colony used some of the latest and biggest technologies available in the late nineteenth century, including large steam-powered pumps and, briefly, an early form of the tractor. But Shalam did not invent new methods. Like others elsewhere in the United States, Shalam pursued a diverse mix of traditional and unexpected farming endeavors, from alfalfa to raisin grapes to nut and fruit orchards—even the brief fad in raising canaigre. The colony also brought what was likely the first herd of Guernsey dairy cows to New Mexico.

Over the last century several historical accounts have been written about the Shalam Colony, each usually building on those before. For the museum's exhibit research project, we returned to primary source materials wherever possible—newspapers, land records, photographs, and other contemporary references. This helped clarify the chronology of exactly when certain events took place and confirmed (or sometimes cast doubt on) the various innovations credited to Shalam.

A Shalam Historiography

For a small and ultimately unsuccessful experiment lasting a mere twenty years, a surprisingly large amount of material exists concerning the Shalam Colony. Even before the founding of the colony, newspapers in New York were writing with curiosity about the Faithists. At least a hundred newspaper articles appeared in newspapers and journals from California to New York between 1882 and 1907, and at least a dozen more retrospective stories in the years after. Many provide accurate information, particularly when backed up by court records. Also of use in confirming newspaper accounts were turn of the century agricultural journals and census records, as well as an incredible booklet Howland printed in 1894 that provides vivid details about the colony grounds and buildings.³³

Numerous formal histories have appeared, the first published just a couple years after the closing of the colony in 1901. George Baker

Anderson emphasized Shalam's strangeness in "The Land of Shalam" in the November 1906 *Out West*, establishing in print several inaccuracies that historians repeated for decades. Some of these reappeared in Julia Keleher's "The Land of Shalam: Utopia in New Mexico," which appeared in the April 1944 *New Mexico Historical Review*. This article actually caused Jone Howland, the daughter of John Newbrough, to break her silence about the Shalam colony and write her own pieces for the review in October 1945. Through her first person knowledge, Howland refuted most of Keleher's piece and corrected the record for future historians.

The most reliable histories of Shalam came from Las Cruces area historians Katherine Sties and Lee Priestley. Stoes was a personal friend of Frances Newbrough Howland, as well as a researcher and historian. Stoes' authoritative "The Land of Shalam" ran in two parts in the *New Mexico Historical Review* in 1958 and set the template for the Shalam narrative. In 1988 Priestley provided even more detail and evidence of subsequent research in *Shalam: Utopia on the Rio Grande, 1881-1907*, the only full-length non-fiction book published about the colony. Priestley makes excellent use of material produced by her and by the Oahspe Research Group, a small group of amateur scholars headed by Jim Dennon that tracked down and compiled court records, deeds, letters, photographs, and other material about Shalam and *Oahspe*. Dennon wrote several pieces on Shalam, which all showcase his thorough research.³⁴

Priestley and Stoes both weaved engaging and solid narratives. In many cases, however, they did not specifically cite where they obtained certain details about the colony, and at times they employ a loose chronology of when events occurred. While there seems little cause to doubt their veracity, it makes it difficult as a researcher to confirm factual elements and establish a definitive chronological time line.

Another account is Elnora Wiley's *Inside the Shalam Colony*, which offers a fictionalized account of the colony. Wiley, who lived on a farm on part of the old Shalam Colony tract, based her story on historical and factual elements, including interviews with Newbrough's daughter Jone Howland. But Wiley deliberately avoided an academic approach in favor of telling a unique and fairly convincing story, and therefore did not cite her sources. While her novel is very readable and sounds very factual, historians will find the accuracy of the details she portrays oftentimes questionable.

Later historians made use of archived material held by the Rio Grande Historical Collections at NMSU, including the papers of Stoes, Priestley, Wiley, and the Oahspe Research Group. While this article mostly focuses on Shalam's agricultural and social footprint, much scholarship exists concerning *Oahspe* and Faithism. In addition to these histories, a necessary reference for any study of Shalam is the bible that inspired it, *Oahspe*.

Shalam's story has most recently been researched and told at the New Mexico Farm & Ranch Heritage Museum. "Shalam Colony: Dream

in the Desert” opened in September 2008 and will be displayed until May 2009. Unlike previous accounts, the museum’s focus was not on the religious aspects of Shalam, but its agricultural activities. Shalam Colony used some of the latest and biggest technologies available in the late nineteenth century, including large steam-powered pumps and, briefly, an early form of the tractor. Like others elsewhere in the United States, Shalam pursued a diverse mix of traditional and unexpected farming endeavors, from alfalfa to raisin grapes to nut and fruit orchards—even the brief fad in raising canaigre. The colony also brought what was likely the first herd of Guernsey dairy cows to New Mexico.

Stoes, Priestley, Wiley, and others created intriguing accounts of Shalam and its Faithist origins. Through this exhibition project, the Farm & Ranch Heritage Museum sought to reframe the discussion—from a rural, agricultural perspective—and to update the chronology and accounts using research tools (like computers) that were not available to previous researchers. This also gave us the opportunity to thoroughly investigate many of the stories associated with Shalam and establish their veracity. The results give us a fresh look at this unique chapter in Southern New Mexico history.

Endnotes

¹ Robert S. Fogarty, *All Things New: American Communes and Utopian Movements, 1860-1914* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990).

² Pronounced “Oh-ah-spec.”

³ The word derives from the continent of Pan described in Oahspe, a concept very similar to the Pangaea supercontinent theory.

⁴ To demonstrate, consider the full title of the book: *Oahspe: A New Bible in the Words of Jehovih and his Angel Embassadors. A Sacred History of the Dominions of the Higher and Lower Heavens on the Earth for the Past Twenty-Four Thousand Years, Together with a Synopsis of the Cosmology of*

the Universe; the Creation of Planets; the Creation of Man; the Unseen Worlds; the Labor and Glory of Gods and Goddesses in the Ethereal Heavens: 1Mb the New Commandments of Jehovih to Man of the Present Day With Revelations from the Second Resurrection, Formed in the Words In the Thirty- Third Year of the Kosmon Era.

⁵ The fifty-year old Howland was married with one child at the time, but it is unclear how that relationship ended.

⁶ “Jehovih” is the name used in *Oahspe* for the universal creator, an alteration of the term “Jehovah.”

⁷ The term “vegan” is relatively recent and was unknown to the Faithists. Vegans do not consume any products from animals,

- including meat, fish, dairy products, or eggs.
- ⁸ A common myth says Newbrough was blindfolded and guided to the site by spirits. The truth is far less mystical.
- ⁹ While the colony property was supposed to be held in common, Howland had the deed registered in his name. He then placed the land in trust to the Faithists (1884) and later to the orphans (circa 1886- 89). He also purchased adjacent properties, eventually bringing the total holdings to 1,490 acres by the end of 1885.
- ¹⁰ It is unclear what this implement was, although it was probably a very early form of a steam tractor pulling a gang plow. (The term “tractor” was not coined until about ten years later by Hart-Parr Company) For the exhibit, we have a representation from a Pennsylvania firm of such a device which may have been what the colony acquired in New York; at that time there were only a couple of American manufacturers of steam tractors or plow units.
- ¹¹ W.C. Bowman, *Rio Grande Republican*, 23 May, 13 June, 20 June, 1885.
- ¹² *Rio Grande Republican*, 30 January 30, 1886. Newbrough told the paper “at present there are 41 members, but the association in the east is 2,000 strong.”
- ¹³ “Shalam Colony Dots,” *Rio Grande Republican*, 7 August 1886. Howland sold his business and came for good in February 1886, living alone in the Fraternum with his dog Frappie.
- ¹⁴ *Rio Grande Republican*, 30 January 1886.
- ¹⁵ When she came to Shalam, Frances apparently adopted the last name Sweet. This may have been part of the cover story that she had become pregnant with and had briefly married a Dr. Sweet in New York.
- ¹⁶ One child died about Christmas 1899 from burns sustained when his clothing got caught in a fireplace.
- ¹⁷ Elias Day, letter to *Grace Day*, May 1893. This letter offers many incredible details about Howland and the children.
- ¹⁸ The incorrect date of 23 April 1891 is on his headstone at the Masonic Cemetery in Las Cruces.
- ¹⁹ *Rio Grande Republican*, 1 May 1891.
- ²⁰ *Rio Grande Republican*, 4 February 1898.
- ²¹ Other than a few unusual crops in the Shalam home garden, all of the crops grown at Shalam were normal for the valley.
- ²² “The Levitician Colony,” *Southwestern Farm and Orchard* 1 (April 1895).
- ²³ *Howland v. Orphans*; Katherine Stoes, “The Land of Shalam,” *New Mexico Historical Review* 33 (April 1958): 102-127; Lee Priestley, Shaiaam: *Utopia on the Rio Grande*, 1881-1907 (El Paso: Texas Western Press, 1988).
- ²⁴ See the *Rio Grande Republican*, 5 May 1894, for the report of the armed robbery of the Shalam bankroll. “It is well known that they will make no resistance they have been frequent victims of highway robbery, causing not a little trouble to the sheriffs of Doña Ana County. They do not carry this principle so far as to allow themselves to be altogether trampled upon, for all

cattle that are found trespassing upon their property are very promptly impounded and the owners made to pay pretty smartly before they can get them out.” “The Shalamaties,” *Southwestern Farm and Orchard* 1 (September 1894): 1-2.

25 The spelling of Shalam with an “e” stuck, and is now seen in the name of the road Shalem Colony Trail, which passes the Shalam colony site.

26 In her 1960 interview, Jone’s feelings toward her birth father John B. Newbrough are complex and full of bitterness. She saw Howland as her true father, and calls him the kindest man she ever knew. When she changed her name, though, she altered the spellings because of her belief in numerology, which stated names containing the letter “a” demonstrated a sign of weakness.

27 Nin and Fifi both married men from Doña Ana, Adolfo Garcia and Carlos Barela, and a questionable story exists that the two were “kidnapped” from Shalam by their future husbands. Ral married R.D. King of El Paso, and stayed with the Howlands until she was married. Fifi had two children, one who died at two of scarlet fever, and Fifi died several years later. After the death of her first husband, Nin married Alfred Carpenter, an El Paso plumber.

28 Ral, Nin, and Archie, as well as another

orphan Hiatisi (later known as Mrs. Mary Lampe), were bequeathed \$100 each in the Howlands’ wills. By then they were going by their new names.

29 Green is still considered to have ever been the richest woman in the world. At the time of her death, the estate was worth something between \$100-200 million (\$1.9 to \$3.8 billion dollars in today’s money). She’s also in the Guinness Book of World Records as the “World’s Greatest Miser.”

30 The interview shows Howland was critical of Newbrough as a liar, and while she loved Howland, she thought “he had no more sense than an imbecile, because he spent down to his last dollar” due to his blind faith in Newbrough and the mission of Shalam.

31 When the Children’s Home was torn down in the 1970s, some of the wood was recycled into the large barn that was built almost on top of the previous building site.

32 A small group of Shalam enthusiasts, led by Shalam Colony And Oahspe Museum founder LesLee Alexander, instigated the state marker in 2004.

33 Shalam Colony Articles. Oahspe Research Group. Self-published. Shalam Colony Folder. Rio Grande Historical Collections, NMSU.

34 Shalam Colony Folder.

SHALAM MISCONCEPTIONS AND MYTHOLOGY

Cameron L. Soften and Christopher Schurtz

One of the objectives of the New Mexico Farm and Ranch Heritage Museum's research was to sort out fact from fiction by identifying Shalam stories that have circulated (some going back to its creation) and assessing their accuracy. Most of these came from the general "Shalam mythology," a body of fictional stories that have been perpetuated without malice—just out of lack of knowledge. Some have a basis in fact but have been twisted. As part of the exhibit development, the curatorial team identified these stories and answered them based on our research findings.

John Newbrough traveled through the Southwest blindfolded and found Shalam purely through inspiration or divine guidance.

Jone Howlind said this was entirely false. It appears that Newbrough had gained an interest in the American Southwest from his years working gold mines in California in the 1850s. When he sought a new colony site, he purportedly traveled throughout the region (including parts of Mexico). He found his land of Shalam through connections with his brother Masons group in Las Cruces.

Shalam Colony was originally going to be established somewhere in the Eastern United States.

True. Early Faithists, including Newbrough, were scouting sites in Virginia or West Virginia as possible locations for the colony, but Newbrough apparently wanted to be further from the sins of the large cities.

Shalam Colony was a utopian community.

False. Although the Howlands periodically referred to this Faithist endeavor as being communalistic, they never described themselves as utopian (or idealists). The term did exist, and they would have known of it, so their not describing it as utopian was intentional. The Shalamites merely lived together with a shared purpose and were not trying to create utopia—a "heaven on earth."

The Shalamites were Jewish.

False. This is a common misconception because "Shalam" is close to the Jewish word "shalom." However, the Faithist's "new bible" Oahspe does include aspects from most of the world's major religions, including Judaism. The Shalamites are properly called Faithists, a form of spiritualism.

John Newbrough's paintings were produced by inspiration—in the darkness of the Studio.

Unlikely. The Studio was not built until 1890 after much of the work on the revised Oahspe—including the paintings—was finished. This story is not unlike that of how Newbrough was inspired to produce the original Oahspe on his typewriter in New York.

President Benjamin Harrison was upset by the sarcastic tone of appellate Judge Freeman's findings in the Ellis vs. Newbrough court case.

While Freeman's opinion was over the top, it is unlikely that Harrison was aware of it—even though he had just appointed Freeman to the Territorial Supreme Court a few months before. (The case did have a significant legal precedent that is still cited in cases today)

John Newbrough was a witness to every wedding at Shalam Colony—including that of his wife Frances after his death!

According to legal documents found in the Doña Ana County courthouse, this is true! Newbrough is listed as the first witness to three weddings. This was likely a nod to the spiritualism of Oahspe that their founder was witness in spirit to the nuptials. Some historians speculate (particularly in the case of the Howland-Newbrough marriage), that Newbrough's son may have witnessed the nuptials, but his name was William.

Andrew Howland's union with Frances Newbrough was the second marriage for both.

True on both counts. According to the 1880 census, Andrew was married with one child living in Suffolk County Mass. (We do not know how this marriage ended.) While Frances purportedly was married to a Dr. Sweet, this appears to have been a falsehood intended to hide the illegitimate birth of Justine Newbrough. Frances married Howland several years after the death of her first husband, John Newbrough.

The orphan children were vegans just like the adults.

Not until they were older. The Faithists recognized that the youngest children needed the extra protein from milk and cheese products, though the rest of their diet was vegetarian. While we know that some of the orphans sent away died of stomach ailments (we conjecture from the sudden transition to a "traditional" orphanage diet), we did not learn if the other orphans continued

to be vegans or vegetarians in their adulthoods.

The first Guernsey cattle in New Mexico were at Shalam Colony.

This appears to be true. Howland purchased his purebred animals in the late 1890s from prominent Eastern dairies. Local dairy producers at the time were using Holsteins, jersey's, or other lesser breeds.

The efforts to raise chickens at Shalam failed because a colonist failed to keep the burners up and the poultry froze to death on a cool night.

While this story appears frequently in the Shalam mythology, we could not prove it either way. While plausible, this may have been an invented story—to go along with the cursed farm land for why Shalam agriculture failed. (Also, by the time the poultry plant was built in the late 1890s, there were no other colonists—though we do know that Howland hired a ‘poultry manager’ at one point.)

The pump at Shalam Colony could move one million gallons of water a day.

Although Jone Howland said this was a factual error this appears to be true—though there was not actually a million gallons of water available to pump! The pump’s capacity, as reported in several contemporary sources and ads for the pump company, was about a million gallons a day. This pump would fill half the reservoir in a day’s time.

Shalam Colony was a place of innovative and diverse agriculture that was “ahead of its time.”

Somewhat true. Because of Howland’s financial backing, Shalam acquired the latest “cutting edge” equipment and followed the current agricultural trends. While these were new to New Mexico Territory, there were not innovations or inventions of the Shalamites. The 1880s marks the beginning of an age of agricultural science where experimentation was the rule. New Mexico A&MA College was trying several crops just as Shalam was. With the exception of canaigre, everything planted at Shalam was typical of the period.

Few of the new things tried at Shalam ever caught on in the Mesilla Valley. Reliable irrigation finally came in the form of the Elephant Butte Irrigation District a decade after the Howlands left; the reservoir-type arrangement was never really adopted by anyone else. Similarly, while Newbrough acquired a very early type of steam tractor, local farmers did not adopt this technology

until more than forty years later—in the form of the much further evolved gasoline tractor.

The Shalamites were nudists.

No, though they apparently did believe that the sun was good for you. This myth may stem from the “scarcity” of their outfits, which were certainly lighter and less bulky or cumbersome than Victorian clothing, corsets, and other materials of that day.

The residents of Shalam Colony practiced “free love.”

This rumor started in early 1885 not long after the colonists arrived, apparently as an explanation of why the colony could not attract anyone and why people were leaving. One of its first defectors, W. C. Bowman, emphatically stated that this rumor was untrue. It persisted, though. Some historians believe Andrew Howland and Frances Newbrough “had to get married” to put such rumors to rest.

Shalam was a closed society, and its residents married within the society and had children to protect the bloodline of the Faithists.

False. While the Faithist ideology failed to attract many people, Shalam was an open group. No children were born at Shalam or from any of the marriages that took place there, except for the White family from Levitica.

One or two of the orphans were adopted by Booker T. Washington.

False. There is nothing to substantiate that Washington had any contact with the Howlands. Two of the children (Thale and Vobu) were apparently taken in as students of Washington’s Tuskegee Institute in Alabama. We speculate that Frances may have contacted Tuskegee because an article about it appeared in the same issue of New England Magazine as an article about Shalam in 1897.

Several orphan girls ran away and eloped with local boys from Doña Ana.

Not true. When the orphans were sent away, the oldest ones were just about to turn fourteen. The three girls who the Howlands kept (Nin, Fifi, and Ral) did marry boys from the El Paso/Las Cruces area, but it was when they were in their late teens or early twenties—several years after Shalam Colony closed.

The orphans included several “criminals on the rampage.”

This is pretty unlikely. First, the oldest orphans were only 13 when Howland sent most of them away. Second, the children were raised as pacifist, law-abiding residents. We found no evidence to support this claim.

“Himalawowoaganapaland” is another word that refers to Shalam.

True—at least as reported in the New York Sun in 1907. The word comes from Oahspe.

Andrew Howland intentionally misspelled Shalam when creating the Shalem Planting Company in 1906 to protect its religious significance.

This is not implausible, but we cannot prove it one way or the other. It could be that a clerk preparing the legal documents for Howland’s partners simply misspelled it. “Shalem” was almost as common in contemporary accounts as the proper “Shalam.”

Andrew (& Frances) Howland died virtually destitute after spending his fortune on Shalam Colony.

False. While he was cash poor operating Shalam, he did receive about \$60,000 for the sale of the land. Andrew Howland’s estate also received part of the great Howland family fortune from whaling when it was distributed shortly after his death. The Howlands lived out their years in El Paso in relative comfort. In fact, the Howlands and their daughter Jone all had extensive land holdings throughout the Mesilla and El Paso valleys.

The land of Shalam Colony is cursed, as indicated by the dozens of people have owned parts of it since Howland sold it in 1907.

The premise is false. The announcement of the Elephant Butte Dam project sparked a period of intensive land speculation in the Lower Rio Grande Valley. As a result, some properties changed hands hundreds of times. Today the Shalam lands are regarded as some of the prime agricultural real estate in the Mesilla Valley

The Shalam fountain still exists and is kept in a local family’s backyard.

This is untrue. The confusion stems from the 1945 New Mexico Magazine article, which includes a picture of a cast-iron fountain in nearby Doña Ana that the author attributes to Shalam. That fountain, which the family says was acquired by their Wertheim family ancestors (merchants in Doña Ana), is still around in a

local backyard.

We know from photo evidence that the Shalam fountain was made entirely of stone. We found nothing to indicate what ever came of it. We assume a subsequent owner tore it down.

The original 1882 Oahspe manuscript is in the University of Texas at El Paso Special Collections.

This is likely false. An edited typescript did find its way to UTEP via the local women's club—who Frances (or Jone) was likely friendly with. Oahspe researchers say at best it is an early version of what became of the 1891 edition, though some speculate that it may be a fabrication meant to cover up Jone's destruction of the original manuscript. At various times, Jone claimed the manuscript had been destroyed in an El Paso flood or that she had burned it.

The death date on John Newbrough's grave marker is wrong.

True. When the Colorado Faithists got the stone monument made in the 1950s, they mistakenly engraved the day after as his date of death.

Dr. Cameron L. Saffell has been Curator of History at the New Mexico Farm & Ranch Heritage Museum since 1999. Christopher Schurtz is a public history graduate student at NMSU. Saffell oversaw the historical research design and development for "Shalam Colony: Dream in the Desert," showing from September 2008 to May 2009 at the Museum, while Schurtz served as lead researcher and assistant curator.

MARY HELEN DANIELS TAYLOR: MARY OF THE MANTILLA

Frankie Miller

The sanctuary of San Albino was filled to overflowing. The crowd spilled out of the church and down the front steps of the church. Inside, younger worshipers respectfully gave their seats to the dozens of *viejos y viejas* who needed to be seated. Still, the side aisles, entry, balcony and crying room were filled, people standing pressed into each other to keep the main aisle open for Monsignor Robert L. Getz and the family of Mary Daniels Taylor to make their way to the front of the sanctuary. From Mary and her untiring research, we know that this newest structure of San Albino was built by Father Jean Grange, a French missionary priest, in 1908. The main altar and its mate in the crying room were carved by his hands and decorated with *Fleur de lies*. A larger church would have held all of the people who came to show respect for Mary and her family, but Mary would not have had her Mass anywhere else. All seven of Mary and Paul's children were baptized, made their first communions and were confirmed in this beautiful little church on the Mesilla plaza. How many hours Mary must have spent in prayer inside these cool walls, we will never know. Monsignor Getz must have known, because he referred to her as "Mary of the Mantilla." He must have seen her bowed head gracefully draped in the soft lace of a Spanish mantilla hundreds of times. Mary's devotion to Mesilla, the *Mesilleros*, her family and the culture of the border area were the cause of this outpouring of love and respect. Before and after the service, which was an affirmation of a life lived in faith, mourners joined the groups discussing everything Mary had accomplished and given to her community in her lifetime.

Mary Helen Daniels grew up in El Paso Texas where her father, Albert Milton Daniels, worked as a manager in a cement plant. She attended kindergarten at Loretto Academy and then became a student at Cathedral School for a couple of semesters. During fourth grade Mary had to be home schooled for a time because she had been ill with rheumatic fever. When she returned to school, it was to attend White Elementary School in El Paso, and she really loved it. Mary got to ride the school bus, boys and girls attended classes together, and she could play all kinds of games, such as volleyball. She was a self-admitted tomboy. A student at El Paso High School, she remembered loving school, and there she began writing and became a member of ROTC.¹

Mary's love of regional history grew from the influence of her mother, who would take Mary, 'an only child,' out into the desert and into washed out arroyos searching for odd artifacts left behind from old forts. Her mother was a history buff and always subscribed to *True West* magazine. As a young woman, Mrs. Daniels had also worked for Pat Garret when he was a United States Customs agent. She used to tell stories about him, "something about smuggling cigars across the

border...”.² During a time when the history of the Hispanic people was not taught, Mary learned much about the long history of the Spanish Colonial Southwest, Paso del Norte (Ciudad Juarez) and the battles that took place there. Having seen so much prejudice and discrimination, growing up in a border community, Mary was very concerned about the unfair treatment of the Hispanic people. Her love of the local, multicultural traditions and history coupled with her talent for writing began to make Mary a natural historian.

During World War II, Mary was a young college student, first at Texas College of Mines (now University of Texas at El Paso), and later at New Mexico College of Agriculture and Mechanical Arts (NMCA&M, which became New Mexico State University), in Las Cruces. Mary remembered moving speeches during the war years, given by the college president, Hugh Milton. She described one graduation she attended at NMCA&M where it was compulsory for all young men to belong to ROTC during their first two years of study. When many young male graduates accepted their diplomas, and crossed past the podium, they would remove their caps and gowns to reveal military uniforms beneath them. Mothers and sweethearts cried because they recognized that the young men they loved were on their way to war, perhaps never to return. Mary spoke of the Free French, who came to campus during that time period and gave very moving talks to try and fire up young Americans to join their fight.³ In the summer of 1943, Mary graduated from Texas College of Mines with a major in English and a minor in History.

During these college years Mary met her future husband, Paul Taylor, on a street corner in downtown El Paso, while watching the Sun Carnival Parade. Their mothers knew each other, and the two were introduced. Both Mary and Paul enjoyed anthropology and history and were both from devout Catholic families. They loved music and attended dances together. During the period that Mary attended school in New Mexico, she and Paul took some of the same classes, and Mary admitted to studying from her beau's superior lecture notes.⁴

On graduation, Mary took a job teaching second grade at White Elementary School in El Paso, the same school she had attended as a child. She admitted that it felt a little strange to be teaching where she had been a student, but the second graders had kept her so busy that she soon forgot about it. She then continued her teaching career at Bowie High School, and her interest in the history and culture of the Hispanic community continued there. In an interview Mary related.

[I] taught World History and Latin-American history at Bowie High School in El Paso for \$100.00 a month. But at this last place, I really found out where it's at—these were Mexican kids who wanted to know only why the rest of the high schools in El Paso looked down on them, jeered at them and called them names like 'spik,' greaser,' Mex,' etc. ad nauseum. It took me quite a while to answer their questions, but from that bit of research; I've hardly even ever come up for air. You hear about people being 'driven' to do something—I'm driven to find out and to write down whatever

I find of the history of these, the people I claim to be mine.

Mary specifically made note of an experience at Bowie that was important for her to share in her interview. After the Philippines were liberated in World War II and the Bataan POWs returned home, General Jonathan Mayhew Wainwright, who had himself been held as a prisoner of war in the Philippines, came to Bowie High School and reviewed the ROTC group on the parade ground. Mary felt that General Wainwright had chosen that school, whose students were mostly Hispanic, because he had been in the prisoner of war camps with so many Hispanic soldiers and had learned to respect them and value their contributions to the war. Mary talked of how proud the young students were to have General Wainwright review them, and how, "When he stepped on the parade ground it was like watching a human skeleton. He was there at the end of the war when the Japanese had given up."⁶ But Mary was so grateful for the esteem his visit gave the young Hispanic men who were used to being discriminated against in their own community and for whom, it seemed, nothing good ever came.

When the war began on 7 December 1941, Mary heard the reports of the attack on Pearl Harbor while listening to the radio with her parents. She said that they just could not believe that a country would do such a thing. Following graduation from NMCA&M in 1942, Paul Taylor, who had become Mary's fiancé, enlisted in the Navy and worked with naval intelligence in El Paso and New Orleans. He and Mary were married on 27 December 1945 at the Immaculate Conception Church in El Paso, the church where Mary was baptized, made her first communion, and was confirmed. On their way back to New Orleans, Mary and Paul spent their honeymoon on the train. Mary loved New Orleans, and a couple with whom they and Paul were friends wanted Paul to go into business with them running a liquor store. Paul would have none of that; the young couple returned to the Mesilla Valley that they both loved, and Paul was named assistant registrar in the same office at NMCA&M where he had worked in as a student.⁷

When Mary was expecting their first child, Robert, the Taylors bought their first old adobe house in Mesilla, which was located by the post office. Mary described this home as a "trial," but that they gradually got it going. It was just a broken-down shell of a house that had cost the Taylors \$2,000.00. Mary's father helped them with funds and building materials.⁸ Mary and Paul shared the same vision of what the house could be and finally got enough work done to move in and spend their first Christmas there. Robert was born there on 24 September 1947, and Delores followed two years later in September 1949.⁹ In her journal, many years later, Mary fondly remembered sitting on her porch in front of this first restored adobe home in Mesilla, rocking Robert in the late afternoon, a peaceful, quiet time for mother and baby.¹⁰

But the young Taylor family was growing, and the couple began to look around for a home that would grow with their family. In 1953 the

Taylor's purchased the Barela-Reynolds property from Perla Alidib. Perla had inherited it from Monsignor Grange upon his death, after working for many years as his housekeeper. Afraid to live alone after having been attacked and beaten by the husband of a tenant, Perla approached the Taylors and asked if they would like to purchase the home. Perla then built a small home adjacent to the church, where Del Sol is now located. The old territorial adobe was in need of serious restoration, and the Taylors already had some experience with that. As their family grew, they did what New Mexican families have always done; they added on and added on. The Taylors extended the portal and added a room and then added the *oratorio* or chapel.¹¹ In this home on the plaza, the Taylor family grew to include seven children, and the restoration was an ongoing project. The Taylor children will sometimes point out that living in a historic home on the Mesilla plaza is not as glamorous as it may sound. Rosemary, one of the younger children, told of a time she woke up with a face full of dirt that had dropped from the old *latillas* in the ceiling of her bedroom.¹² Even today, restoration continues on the beautiful home, which will eventually become a state museum.

Mary had wonderful memories of raising her family in Mesilla, on the plaza, just a short walk from the beautiful San Albino. Her boys served as altar boys for early Mass every day, partly because they could be at the church in minutes. All of her children attended Mesilla Elementary and played behind the house and in the neighborhood with other children. Mary remembered how the children loved to come to her home to play and have ice cream bars when it was especially hot outside. Paul often speaks of what a good mother Mary was and how she was the reason that the children turned out so well. The children remember a strict mother, "And my Momma was a little bit quick with the fly swatter and the belt. She had a full house to run and her work to do. We just couldn't be fouling out right and left and get away with it."¹³ Rosemary also had a run-in with mom's swatter when she was young.

I can remember one of the things that we were forbidden to do was to walk on the ditch banks when they were full, up to a certain age. One day I did. I went on the ditch bank with my friend, and I knew I wasn't supposed to but I did anyway. It was one afternoon and I remember to my horror looking down the ditch bank and seeing my Mom. She was in her bathrobe. She had her yellow fly swatter with her, and I was horrified. She was madder than a hornet because I disobeyed her so she got after me with that yellow fly swatter.¹⁴

The girls remember getting into trouble for fighting with each other and as punishment their mother put them on opposite sides of the window to clean. They could not talk and argue any more but could only work. Well, it was not long before the girls could not stay angry with each other and began to laugh. Two girls who loved each other so

much could not possibly have stayed mad for long, and their mother knew it. It is easy to imagine two little girls dissolving into a puddle of giggles, unable to keep up the fight.

The children all remember the big family Sunday dinners, with chicken and mountains of mashed potatoes. Mary had learned wonderful Mexican food recipes from her mother in law, “Grand mommy,” and the children loved her posole. Delores reminisced, “Well, my mom made some killer chicken cacciatore. I wish she had made more of that.”¹⁵ But, with seven children Mary must have always “made more” to feed such a busy group of growing kids. Sunday dinners at the Taylor’s house always included guests Mary and Paul had invited to dinner after church, and the children met many interesting people on those Sundays.

Mary, who had always loved history, became involved in researching the history of Mesilla and the Mesilla Valley through oral histories she took from elder Mesilleros who could remember the turn of the century and from her research in primary sources. She and her dear friend, Nona Barrick, researched the El Paso Archives and the Ciudad Juarez Municipal Archives, *Los Archivos de Ayuntamiento del Paso del Norte*. Mary and Nona spent three years going through these archives and then another four years researching in the library at the University of Texas at El Paso, which houses microfilms from Parral and Janos.

Mary also did research about Tortugas and the indigenous tribes for Dr. Terry Reynolds, who was researching the tribes in the Mesilla area. Dr. Reynolds, retired curator of Kent Hall Museum at New Mexico State University, fondly says that Mary Taylor actually mentored her. Dr. Reynolds was one of the many close friends and colleagues who surrounded the Taylor Sunday dinner table and shared in the companionship of Mary, Paul and their children.

Mary and Nona Barricks’ research on Mesilla pointed them to follow original sources to the Archives of the Archdiocese of Durango, Mexico. Mary was permitted, during some five trips, to use these archives, which had been almost completely closed to researchers for many years. These primary documents are invaluable to historians of the southwest. “There are sections of *Diezmos*, collections of inventories of tithable goods in the diocese; there are *diligencias matrimoniales*, papers concerning marriages; *bautimos*, records of parochial baptisms; and *padrones*, census documents from portions of the diocese.”¹⁶ Mary recognized the value of these archives for researchers and as the real history of New Mexico and northern Chihuahua. “Anything that happened in New Mexico or Northern Chihuahua since the distant beginning of the viceroalties up to and through the Mexican Revolution of 1910 can be found in these archives. Priests writing to priests about politics, priests to bishops, *Intendientes* to anyone within earshot (or eyeshot)- it’s all here.”¹⁷ Mary held a special friendship with a native of Durango, who not only helped her gain access to the archives, but also continued researching in the

archdiocesan archives when Mary was at home with her family. Mary and Teresa Dorador de Reyes researched together and corresponded with one another for many years. Teresa's son Pepe lived with the Taylors as an exchange student as did many other foreign students.

Mary recalled the magic the Durango Archives held for her and described her visits there, which, according to her husband Paul, began around 1976. The Durango trips typically lasted two weeks, and Mary usually stayed with her good friend Teresa on each trip. Although Mary was very ill by the time I interviewed her in October 2005, the enchantment of her research in Durango was still evident when she held her hand up to describe slipping behind the velvet curtain at the back of the Cathedral and into the room that held the archival records.

In the archives in Durango where all the archives of the bishopric of Durango had been deposited, where there was a room in back... there with a velvet curtain over it, and we ducked through the curtain and came upon these rows and rows of all kinds of types of ..beautiful (archives)... with twine and a little sign underneath it that said 1830 or 1732 or whatever. I had, by that time, studies enough that I knew where all theses dates belonged.¹⁸

Listening to and watching Mary describe this magical place, I was aware that despite the passage of time and her illness, this place and her research there were one of the passions of her life.

Among Mary's research and correspondence there are many reminders that she was also a mother of seven busy children. Stapled in several pages of research, neatly typed on thin blue paper is an airplane, drawn on the same blue paper by the small hand of a child inserting himself into his mother's writing time. There is one letter entitled "Circular #2, dated January 7, 1977," that Mary composed to her family to let them know that she was starting a new book and there needed to be some rules, so she could get some work done. She was not very firm setting her rules and for each one she did set seemed to make exceptions.

*I plan to have supper ready from 5:30 to 6:15 Exceptions are certainly in order for those who have irregular work or school schedules. I'd like to get the K.P. done by 6:45 so I can look at Mash or dive right into work again. These are not hard bound rules; this is just what I'd usually like to have done...I love all of you and I will certainly try to do things as I usually do. Nothing will be changed. I love you all.
Ma XXX¹⁹*

Mary Taylor was responsible for the Durango Microfilming Project, which began in 1992 and continued until 2005. The purpose of the project was to preserve fragile original records by microfilming them in order make the information available to a larger number of researchers, and to provide historical documentation from a Mexican point of view. The project required participation of the Archdiocese of Durango, Mexico, the Universidad Juarez del Estado de Durango

(UJED) the Archivo Historico del Estado de Durango, the Instituto de Investigaciones Históricas de UJED and the Rio Grande Historical Collections, Archives and Special Collections Department, New Mexico State University Library. Researchers can now access primary documents that relate to the Spanish Colonial period of northern Chihuahua, Paso del Norte, and the Mesilla Valley.

Mary drew extensively from the Durango archives for her book, *A Place as Wild as the West Ever Was: Mesilla, New Mexico, 1848-1872*. Paul Taylor has said that the research for the Mesilla book took thirty years. The early morning photograph of a fog covered Mesilla Plaza, which is on the cover of her book, was taken by Mary, who was also a professional photographer, who captured many photos of parish life in Mesilla and of her Mesilleros.

From a long life of research and writing, Mary has been recognized by her community and various organizations throughout the southwest. Mary received the Doña Ana County Historical Society's Hall of Fame Award in 1983 for her many years of work to help preserve Fort Filmore. *A Place as Wild as the West Ever Was* won the Book of the Year award from the Friends of the Branigan Library and the Pasajero del Camino Real Award from the Doña Ana County Historical Society. Mary passed on the research for a new book to be completed by her son Michael Romero Taylor, also a southwest historian.

The home of Mary and Paul Taylor is filled with family treasures of Paul's Romero ancestry and with items of art and history collected over sixty years of marriage. Mary and Paul enjoyed sharing their home and gave tours to friends, visitors and school groups for many years; Paul continues to give tours today. The Taylor children remember being in bed early while their parents were still entertaining guests and not being happy that their parents conducted tours through the bedrooms where they were supposedly asleep. Sometimes, not being in the mood to be toured, they would hide under their beds. One evening, a little Taylor reached out from under his bed and grabbed a visitor's leg and got into trouble for scaring the guest half to death.

Many years ago, Mary, Paul and their children decided to make a gift of their historic home and its many artifacts to the Museum of New Mexico, to be used as a state monument. Visitors for many years will be able to tour the Taylor home and not only wonder at the art work and artifacts collected by Mary and Paul, but also enjoy the story of the wonderful family that lived and loved in the restored adobe home on the plaza. When asked what she would like people to know, their daughter, Mary Helen, said:

I guess I would just like to say that this was our home... our family evolved in this place. We've had weddings here, we've had many celebrations and that it's a living place of history. It's filled with items of love and tender care and preservation. It shows our religious faith, it shows basically how a family in our time period growing up through the '50s, '60s, '70s until now—how we lived and worked

*and played together. So, I'm hoping that they will take from this an experience of family and love because that's what we did here.*²⁰

Endnotes

- 1 Mary Daniels Taylor, interview by Frankie Miller, 2005.
- 2 Michael Taylor, interview by John Hunner, 2005.
- 3 Mary Daniels Taylor, papers of Mary Daniels Taylor, Rio Grande Historical Collection, Archives and Special Collections Department, New Mexico State University Library.
- 4 Donna Eichstaedt, "J. Paul Taylor: True Son of the Mesilla Valley," *Southern New Mexico Historical Review*, 13 (January 2006): 79.
- 5 Mary Daniels Taylor, Papers of Mary Daniels Taylor, Rio Grande Historical Collection, Archives and Special Collections Department, New Mexico State University Library.
- 6 Mary Daniels Taylor, interview by Frankie Miller, 10 October 2005.
- 7 Ibid.
- 8 Ibid.
- 9 J. Paul Taylor, Interview with Frankie Miller, 2007.
- 10 Mary Daniels Taylor, papers of Mary Daniels Taylor, Rio Grande Historical Collection, Archives and Special Collections Department, New Mexico State University Library.
- 11 J. Paul Taylor, Interview with Frankie Miller, 2007.
- 12 Rosemary Taylor, interview by Jon Hunner, 2005.
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- 16 Molly Molloy, Durango Microfilming Project-New Mexico State, <http://lanic.utexas.edu/la/region/news/arc/lasnet/1995/0346.html>, accessed 1 December 2007.
- 17 Papers of Mary Daniels Taylor, Rio Grande Historical Collection, Archives and Special Collections Department, New Mexico State University Library.
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- 19 Papers of Mary Daniels Taylor, Rio Grande Historical Collections, Archives and Special Collections Department, New Mexico State University library.
- 20 Mary Helen Taylor Ratje, interview with John Hunner, 2005.

CREATING AN INSTITUTION “SO THE FUTURE MAY KNOW”

Cameron L. Saffell

For ten years visitors have come to the New Mexico Farm & Ranch Heritage Museum—an institution dedicated to preserving and interpreting the farming, ranching, and rural heritage of this state and region. Its history, though, does not begin with the doors opening to the public on 17 May 1998; instead, it goes back more than thirty years to the shared vision of two men: Dr. Gerald Thomas and Dr. William Stephens.

Gerald Thomas came to New Mexico in 1970 with an extensive agricultural pedigree. He was born and raised on what he describes as a “marginal ranch” in Idaho, attending rural public schools there through the tenth grade and completing high school in California. His collegiate education interrupted by World War II (and his distinguished service as a naval torpedo pilot), Thomas completed a forestry degree at the University of Idaho before the war, then attended graduate school at Texas A&M on the GI Bill to get his Ph.D. in range management. After graduation he spent eight years in teaching and research positions at Texas A&M, followed by twelve years as Dean of the College of Agricultural Sciences at Texas Tech University.¹

It was his time at Texas Tech that planted the seeds of inspiration in Thomas’ mind. The Southwest Collection, a historical archive that included farming and ranching collections, organized and expanded while he was in Lubbock. Concurrently, discussions were underway about establishing a museum of ranching history—what became the National Ranching Heritage Center. Thomas watched these developments with keen interest, before and after he came to Las Cruces in 1970 to become president of New Mexico State University (NMSU).

As he surveyed the situation in his new home state, he became concerned that New Mexico’s agricultural heritage was being siphoned off. Institutions from California, Wyoming, and Texas were purloining historical records. Working with history professor Monroe Billington and the university library, Thomas helped establish the Rio Grande Historical Collections to preserve New Mexico’s agricultural manuscripts and collections. Meanwhile, he looked for a partner to work out an institutional program and museum to preserve agricultural heritage and artifacts.³ That turned out to be Bill Stephens.

William P. “Bill” Stephens grew up on what he called a “starvation farm” in east Tennessee, becoming an active member of the Future Farmers of America (FFA) in high school. After his service in World War II, Stephens pursued agricultural economics degrees from the University of Tennessee-Knoxville and the University of Minnesota. Stephens came to know New Mexico during his years working in the state’s agricultural experiment station system in the 1960s and early 1970s. “He was an exciting scientist, he knew the people, and he had a sense of the rich history of New Mexico,” said Thomas. In 1972 Gov-

error Bruce King appointed Stephens as Director of the New Mexico Department of Agriculture (NMDA).⁴

Like Thomas, Stephens was concerned that New Mexico's agricultural artifacts and heritage were being lost. "People are concerned that we do not lose any more of our oral history or artifacts that rightfully belong to New Mexico," Stephens said. "As I traveled to other states, I found New Mexican artifacts were making their way to other museums because we didn't have one." Stephens credited Governor Jerry Apodaca for provoking him into doing something about it. In 1976 the NMDA organized a state fair exhibit of antique farm machinery to mark the nation's bicentennial. Apodaca encouraged Stephens that his concerns were important and that he should pursue the idea further. Stephens began visiting other agricultural museums around the country, like Sturbridge Village in Massachusetts, the National Ranching Heritage Center at Texas Tech, and the Cowboy Hall of Fame in Oklahoma City. It appears to have annoyed him when he learned that a New Mexico family had donated about \$1 million to the latter.⁵

Thomas and Stephens met periodically in the 1970s and 1980s to kick the idea around, but they did little more than talk about it until after Thomas retired from the University presidency in 1984. At that point Stephens was a couple of years out from his own retirement, and he wanted to get things going as one of his final projects at NMDA. Stephens talked up the concept of an agricultural heritage institute or program with others in the farm and ranch community and with people in State government. Deming rancher G. X. McSherry recalls Stephens broaching the idea with him during his first year as a state legislator in 1983. After James Halligan was named to succeed Thomas as NMSU president, both men talked to Halligan about it as well.⁶

There was lots of discussion about what should be created. A museum was not necessarily the prime thought, more like an "institute" or "program" to collect and preserve agricultural heritage. Should it be part of NMSU, like an academic center? Or should it be set up within the NMDA? Ultimately, though, all the discussion boiled down to a question of how much support there was in New Mexico. So in 1987, using a large mailing list compiled from the NMDA and the NMSU College of Agriculture and Home Economics, Stephens and Thomas organized a large meeting to start gauging the interest.⁷ Through this and several fol-



Fig. 1
New Mexico Farm and Ranch Heritage Institute Foundation Logo, photo courtesy of New Mexico Farm and Ranch Museum

low-up meetings, momentum began to build. This culminated in the creation of the New Mexico Farm and Ranch Heritage Institute Foundation (NMF&RHI) (fig. 1). In 1990 it created the saying “So the Future May Know” campaign—a phrase which became the figurative battle cry to increase public awareness and eventually to establish an agricultural heritage museum. Although it incorporated as a non-profit organization in 1989, the NMF&RHI was hosted for its first several years and given administrative support by NMDA.

As Thomas and Stephens conceived it, they envisioned an institution that would figuratively, if not literally, be tied to New Mexico State University. One of the early locations being considered was on campus land adjacent to the USDA Cotton Ginning Lab. President Halligan, though always very supportive of the idea of having a farm and ranch institute, did not like the idea of it being attached to NMSU. He was concerned that it would become another line item in the budget that he could not justify to legislators when he was trying to get funding. In addition, several people in the College of Agriculture did not want to give up some of their prime research lands right down the street from the center of campus. Others privately expressed concerns that Stephens was merely an “empire builder,” trying to add to the duties and prestige of the state Department of Agriculture, possibly at the cost of the state agricultural extension service.⁸

Amongst these privately expressed concerns, Halligan tried to steer the discussions in a productive direction somewhere else. He suggested everyone consider a twelve-acre tract of University land between the foot of Tortugas Dam and the State Police barracks adjacent to the University golf course. He also suggested, after talking with officials in Santa Fe, that perhaps the project should be established as a State museum within the Office of Cultural Affairs.⁹

Undeterred, Stephens agreed to try that option. Stephens met with the Officer of Cultural Affairs, Helmuth Naumer, who was very supportive of the idea and was willing to talk with people about it, but Naumer could not carry the proposal on his own alone. Stephens became the main mover-and-shaker, drumming up support around the state. With his extensive service as Secretary of Agriculture, the position he retired from in 1988, he had the connections with farmers and ranchers as well as legislators and decision-makers.¹⁰

Stephens went back to Representative McSherry for help with establishing a state agriculture museum. McSherry readily agreed, and in 1988 he introduced legislation to do just that. As first a member and later chair of the House Agriculture Committee, McSherry was a logical person to bring the legislation, but more than that he was an ardent supporter—one which people later identified as a key figure in the effort to create the museum. Despite his position, though, the 1988 legislation—and subsequent bills in the 1989 and 1990 sessions—all failed. It took four years of Stephens talking it up and McSherry and others building support before enough people were convinced of the

importance of having a state agriculture museum.¹¹

The language of the Farm & Ranch Heritage Museum Act, which McSherry worked out with staffers and other legislators over the years, was critical. “The farming and ranching industry of the state has produced a unique common heritage of which all persons should receive knowledge and benefit.” Heritage was a key word for many supporters—there was and is an important agricultural heritage that should be preserved, studied, and displayed, they felt. The legislation called for the principal facility to be located on the NMSU campus, and it would create a twelve-member governing board that would include the director of the Department of Agriculture, the dean of the NMSU College of Agriculture, the Cultural Affairs Officer, and five agricultural producers appointed by the governor and approved by the state senate.¹²

The fourth attempt-1991—proved to be the successful year for establishing the Farm & Ranch Heritage Museum. The key to making this happen then as opposed to earlier years was the man who had just been elected to his third term—Governor Bruce King. A longtime rancher from a farming and ranching family in the Estancia Valley, King recognized the importance of agricultural heritage. He put his name and support behind McSherry’s bill and said, “Let’s get this done.” By then support existed throughout the state, mostly from rural areas with legislators with their own farming backgrounds. Senator Morgan Nelson, a farmer from East Grand Plains who today serves on the Museum’s governing board, said several legislators recognized that this could well be their last chance to establish an agriculture museum—while they still had an agricultural governor and before the legislature was completely dominated by urban-oriented interests. With Stephens lobbying, the project had the official backing of the NMSU Board of Regents, the state cattle growers and wool growers associations, Elephant Butte Irrigation District, the Las Cruces Convention and Visitors Bureau, and it was on the “short list of legislative priorities” for the New Mexico Farm and Livestock Bureau. Editorials from regional newspapers also supported the idea. With now wide-ranging support, the Farm and Ranch Heritage Museum Act passed and was put into law effective 1 July 1991.¹³

Even with the passage of the Act, however, the discussion about where the Museum should be located was not done. Even though the Act specified that it be located on the NMSU campus in Doña Ana County, there were still persistent discussions about whether part or all of the facility should be located at NMSU’s agricultural research facility near Fort Stanton in Lincoln County. The Fort Stanton site was proposed several times as far back as the early 1980s citing several factors. First, the discussions were taking place concurrent to negotiations to relocate the Museum of the Horse from Arizona to Ruidoso Downs, and there was some thought that the two institutions could be combined. Second, some thought the facility might garner more support if it was disassociated from NMSU because there are those folks who would not vote for anything that adds something to New Mexico State, rather

than one of the other state universities. Third, some thought that the museum concept to collect and preserve might conflict too much with the agricultural extension mission of outreach and service. Thomas, Stephens, and others thought these arguments could not overcome Las Cruces' advantages, including the close proximity to NMSU, the state's land-grant college, and its strong potential for positive economic impact and visitation in the state's second-largest city at the juncture of Interstate Highways 10 and 25.¹⁴

A second alternative location emerged shortly after the Act was implemented. Among the original Board members was Yetta Bidegain of Tucumcari, who was trustee for a ranch estate along Interstate Highway 40 just outside of town. She offered to donate a fifteen-acre tract to the State for the new facility. The new governing Board took this offer seriously. Lacking a written commitment from NMSU for university land in Las Cruces, the Board voted to make the Tucumcari site the designated back-up location should things fall apart.

The primary location still under consideration was the tract beside the State Police office. The Farm and Ranch Heritage Institute



Fig.2

Artist's Rendering of Proposed Museum, photo courtesy of New Mexico Farm and Ranch Museum

secured ten acres of the site in its initial 1988 agreement with New Mexico State University prior to the formal establishment of the Museum, which was later supplemented by a twenty-acre tract traded purchased from the Elephant Butte Irrigation District (owners of the Tortugas Dam) by NMSU. To help in the 1991 push to create the Museum, the Institute Foundation commissioned an artist's rendering (fig. 2) of the proposed museum on this site. This visual concept helped secure passage of the Act itself, as well as subsequent small appropriations for the initial operations and designs in 1992 and the first major appropriation of a half million dollars

for a complete design in 1993. The initial design concept called for a 59,000 square foot facility with areas for history and science exhibitions, educational activity areas, a media center, collection and restoration buildings, and a turn-of-the-century farm and ranch headquarters. The estimated project cost was \$3.5 million.¹⁶

With the Museum established in law, Governor King made his first appointments to the new Museum governing board, which met for the first time in early 1992. In 1993 the Museum's first director was hired, Tom McCalmont. A longtime planner and budget officer, McCalmont had worked for ten years in the Historic Preservation Division, another department within the Office of Cultural Affairs. His primary mission in most of his positions had been as a legislative affairs specialist, so

OCA staff and Board members thought he would be a good man to help marshal matters through the state system and gain the capital funding to construct the Museum. McCalmont gets substantial credit for reshaping the “image concept” of the Museum from a “cowboy hall of fame” or “Anglo museum” to a multicultural, all-inclusive concept which legislators found more appealing.¹⁷

With McCalmont helping craft a new interpretation and the support of the Board and the Institute, everything came together in the 1994 session to secure \$7.4 million to build the main facility. Once again, Governor King played a critical role, saying that he would put up one-third of the capital money if McCalmont and others could bring in the rest of the financial support. Further, it is probably not a coincidence that Representative Gary King, the governor’s son, sponsored the legislative funding package. Part of the strategy of having King carry the funding bill, aside from his family connections, was that he was not from Southern New Mexico or Doña Ana County, thus immediately bringing credence and recognition that there was statewide support for the new Museum. G. X. McSherry recalls that the funding bill was among those considered in the final ten minutes of the session that year and that he felt sorry that Bill Stephens had done all this hard work and lobbying for years and everyone was biting their nails to see if it was going to come through. But Stephens was not among those to see this day. He had died four months before the legislative session began, having lived long enough to see the concept gain momentum but not having seen it as a final product—something he could see in front of him and say, “I helped make this happen.”¹⁸

Shortly after the 1994 legislative session Tom McCalmont resigned. His wife had stayed in Santa Fe, and they decided as a family that they did not want to move to Las Cruces. Further, he really was not a museum person, so building the new facility was not really his interest. Cultural Affairs Officer Helmut Naumer and the Museum Board brought in J. Edson Way, who at the time was director of the Space Center museum in Alamogordo. Although Way originally was born in Chicago and grew up in the Midwest, he had married into a New Mexico ranch family. His wife Jenny is connected to the Spade Ranch in Texas and several other ranches in Eastern New Mexico. Way not only had a museum background, having been a director of a sister facility in the state system and having gotten a degree in Museum Studies and Anthropology at Beloit, he also knew farmers and ranchers. He could speak the lingo, and he could dress the part.¹⁹

Way’s lasting contribution in the Museum’s history is helping arrange the switch from the site by the State Police barracks to the present location on Dripping Springs Road. During the preliminary design work, Board members and staff had quickly realized that the eleven acres available at the old location was just not going to be big enough according to the specifications that were being laid out.²⁰ Way worked with NMSU officials, and talked with the Elephant Butte Irrigation

District and the Bureau of Land Management, to secure the 47-acre site where the Museum is presently located. In essence, it was a land swap; the original eleven acres went back to the University and a new thirty-year lease was drawn up between the Office of Cultural Affairs and NMSU for the new site. Subsequently Way was responsible for marshaling the design process to fruition and construction.²¹

The design process had not gotten off to a smooth start. OCA officials used some of the early funding to hire an architect and begin the preliminary designs. The process was temporarily derailed in late 1993 when competing architectural firms sued in state district court alleging procurement code violations in the scoring and selection of the winning bid. After enduring two rounds of attempting to complete the process, OCA Officer Naumer threw everything out and they started over, resulting in a delay of several months. In the second proposal process, the firm of Design Collaborative Southwest won the bid to develop the main facility for the Farm & Ranch Heritage Museum.²²



Fig.3

*Gary Morton and Alvin Davidson,
photo courtesy of New Mexico
Farm and Ranch Museum*

Groundbreaking for the new Museum building took place in August 1995. The event was not the typical toss-your-shovel affair. After a group of Heritage Riders rode in on horseback delivering shovels and post-hole diggers for the dignitaries, volunteer Alvin Davidson plowed across the main building site with his 1937 Deere tractor.²³

The Museum's original logo came from this occasion. A symbolic representation of the museum concept had been a concern for Stephens and others as far back as the founding of the Farm and Ranch Heritage Institute eight years earlier. As McCalmont indicates, it is not that they were lacking for ideas, it was just that no one could agree to anything. At the groundbreaking—almost by happenstance—Gary Morton, the Officer of Cultural Affairs who was one of the Heritage Riders on horseback, rode up to shake hands with Alvin Davidson, who was still on his tractor. A nearby staff member captured the moment in a couple of pictures (fig. 3). Conceptually, it is a farmer and a rancher shaking hands out on a country road somewhere (fig. 4). This logo was used from 1995 to 2000.²⁴



Fig.4

*Shaking Hand Logo,
photo courtesy of New
Mexico Farm and
Ranch Museum*

Staff gathered artifacts and research at its temporary offices while construction got

underway. They also acquired the Museum's first livestock in December 1995. Way learned about a herd of twenty-four Texas Longhorns from Chicosa Lake State Park in a roundabout way. When park officials decided to divest themselves of the animals, one of their first calls was to the director of the Ranching Heritage Center. Among the students working there was Way's daughter Sarah, a student in the museum science program at Texas Tech. Center staff told park officials about the new state agriculture museum and alerted Sarah to ask her father if he had any interest in the Longhorn herd. When he learned that the animals were originally from the registered purebred heritage herd from Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge in Oklahoma, Way immediately agreed to take the animals, site unseen, even though he did not have a place to put them. Park officials transferred the cattle brand with the herd, resulting in the Museum's acquisition and continuing use of the N Bar Bar brand.²⁵



Fig.5

*Construction of Main Building,
1997, photo courtesy of
New Mexico Farm and
Ranch Museum*

Stories about the original Longhorn herd abounded for several years afterward in staff lore. The animals were eventually put up on a ranch about thirty miles west of Las Cruces, but every day one of the original three or four staff members had to drive out to feed them, including curator Bob Hart. One of his favorite stories was about the day he drove out to the ranch and the Longhorns were not there. He could not imagine what had happened, so he called the office in near panic. "Aren't you early," he was asked. Yes, he said, but he had a bunch of other stuff to do and had to get this done first. "Well, just wait until the normal

feeding time. They'll come up shortly." Sure enough, after waiting an hour, here the Longhorns came like clockwork for their daily feed time.²⁶

Construction of the Museum's main building began in 1996 and ended in early 1997 (fig. 5). It was a large enough project—constructing a 97,000 square foot building and clearing and grading a forty-seven-acre site—that it was a big deal in the community, with lots of people coming out to see what was going on. Among those who came out regularly was Hazel Stephens, Bill Stephens's wife. She was very protective of her husband's role in helping to create the museum and very much wanted to continue his legacy. As a former staff member said, "We almost felt like she was inspecting the work as it was going along and making sure it was done right." She came out so regularly that construction manager Dave Harkness says he would see her car driving up and knew it was her. He would drop whatever he was doing and show her everything that had been accomplished since she had last visited (fig. 6).²⁷

Another interesting anecdote has to do with the location

of the Dairy Barn. The Museum does not actually own this structure; it belongs to the Southwest Dairy Producers Association. Although started at about the same time, the Dairy Barn was completed before the main building. According to Edson Way and Dave Harkness, the two men were standing on the north side of the arroyo talking to Southwest Dairy Producer officials about their putting up a dairy barn as part of the Museum campus. When it came to where it should be placed, Way reached down to pick up a rock and heaved it across the arroyo, saying “Right there where that rock landed—that’s where we will build the dairy barn.”²⁸



Fig.6
*Hazel Stephens Tour of
Construction Site,
photo courtesy of New Mexico
Farm and Ranch Museum*

With construction complete in early 1997, staff began moving in from the temporary office and warehouse storage facilities where they had been gathering artifacts. The first couple of years were a strange period, because with the exception of collections storage, they had about 25,000 square feet of empty exhibit space and little else to show. But you could still arrange for a tour of the empty building with a staff member or one of the early volunteers, who would walk you through and talk about how this wall is going to be this and that area will contain thus-and-such. The only “exhibits” were four wagons, a large safe, and a wood cook stove in the main gallery. This was still the case the day of the building dedication in April 1997, attended by an estimated four thousand people. The grand facilities did not escape the notice of outsiders. QVC, the home shopping network, arranged for a live shopping event broadcast from the empty main gallery in November 1997 (fig. 7). Meanwhile the Institute, which had by this time changed its name to the New Mexico Farm & Ranch Heritage Foundation to reflect its role to support the Museum and to mirror its name, began leasing out several empty rooms for catering by the new Purple Sage Restaurant, located in the south wing.²⁹



Fig.7
*QVC Set,
photo courtesy of New Mexico
Farm and Ranch Museum*

The staff’s original intention was to complete the first long-term exhibition, “Generations,” before the Museum opened. By 1998, though, State officials in Santa Fe directed them to immediately prepare to open to the public. The staff set aside “Generations” to create their first exhibit, “Tools and Traditions.” It essentially was an organized display of farm and ranch tools and implements with large photo backdrops. In the hurry to get something pulled together, they used lightweight

livestock panel fences as barriers around the exhibit components. Starting with the formal public opening in May 1998, staff noted that the fences became gathering points for visitors. People would just come up to the fence, lean on it and put a foot up, and start talking to each other about the days when they or their parents used some of the items on exhibit.³⁰

By October 1998 the staff had completed research and mounted their first planned temporary exhibit, “From the Grassroots: The Founding of Our Museum.” There was lots of discussion as construction gave way to exhibit development about how to credit not just Stephens and Thomas, but all of the farmers and ranchers who had helped bring this vision into being. “From the Grassroots” depicted who these people are, what their connections to agriculture were, and why they thought it was important to have a farm and ranch museum.³¹

A key component of “From the Grassroots” was the Museum’s Oral History Program. This harkened back to one of Stephens’ original concerns—that the stories of New Mexico agriculture were being lost. The Museum hired Jane O’Cain to create an oral history program to collect these stories and create a base of material that could be used for all the museum’s exhibits. Over the last decade this has emerged as one of the key collecting components of what the Museum does. It has become a central philosophy that, wherever it can be done, that visitors read or hear the stories of New Mexico’s agricultural heritage from those people who were part of it. To date the Oral History Program has collected about five hundred hours of material from more than two hundred people. Museum staff has used that material for dozens of exhibits ever since, including “Generations.”³²

“Generations” (1999-present) marked a major step in the evolution of the Museum staff and the development of its facilities. Like the Oral History Program, it is firmly based in telling the story of the people of New Mexico farming and ranching, utilizing exemplars of each historical period—from Bat Cave Woman of three thousand years ago to today’s FFA students and modern Zuni farmers still engaging in traditional farming practices. The exhibit includes two notable components. Curator Toni Laumbach, a well-known regional anthropologist and pottery expert led research and design of the Mogollon pithouse. Architects planned its inclusion even before the concrete floor was poured. It was thought that visitors might connect better with the pithouse exhibit if there were objects present that they would recognize from their experiences at other historic sites and museums. Laumbach crafted a design based on the style of the Mimbres Branch of the Mogollon Indians during the period of A.D. 700 to 900. The re-created pithouse represents the most



Fig.8
Pithouse Exhibit,
photo courtesy of New Mexico
Farm and Ranch Museum

accurate representation of 1,200-year old structures, a rural architectural heritage today only found in archaeological contexts in Southwestern New Mexico (fig. 8).³³

The second special item in “Generations” is the representation of a storage room in the Ancestral Puebloan great house of Chetro Ketl, located in Chaco Canyon in Northwestern New Mexico. Like the Mogollon pithouse, authenticity was a key consideration, so Laumbach arranged to bring in a National Park Service Restoration Team from the Chaco Culture National Heritage Site to build the storage room for the exhibit. The team consisted of six Navajo employees who were highly experienced in restorative and stabilizing techniques utilized for ancient ruins. Staff observers were fascinated with how the Navajos went about building the exhibit. It was noted that the older men actually did the stone shaping and fabrication of the structure while the two youngest members of the team did most of the leg work in mixing mortar and hauling in stones (fig. 9).³⁴



Fig.9

*Chaco Storage Room Exhibit,
photo courtesy of New Mexico
Farm and Ranch Museum*

Edson Way served as director from 1994 to 1998, but during the last couple of years of his tenure he concurrently served as the state’s Officer of Cultural Affairs. His original appointment came in May 1997, shortly before the gubernatorial election where Gary Johnson was widely expected not to be re-elected. Rather than give up the relatively secure job as Museum director for a political appointment and get turned out at the end of Johnson’s term, Way was permitted to work three days a week in Santa Fe and two days in Las Cruces. When the election came and Johnson was re-elected,

the Museum Board asked Way to step down formally so it could pursue getting a new, full-time director.³⁵

In August 1999 Mac Harris became the third director of the Farm & Ranch Heritage Museum. While Way had secured the construction of the main building, it was during Harris’ tenure that much of the initial planning and development occurred outside, particularly on the other side of the Tortugas Arroyo referred to as the “South 20.” Being a newcomer to an established Museum staff, Harris helped oversee development of the original *Master Interpretive Plan* (2001), which provides a written structure for subsequent developments of the entire physical and interpretive facilities program at the Museum. He also directed improvements ranging from the installation of “Watering Place,” a sculpture by Armando Alvarez acquired under the state’s Art in Public Places program, to the initial South 20 infrastructure, to the construction of the livestock pen-and-corrals system with the demonstration Round Pen area. The latter was an important improvement on the Museum

grounds. When staff moved into the main building in early 1997, they also brought the Longhorn herd and other new livestock (including a flock of Navaho-Churro sheep) to the site, set up in temporary livestock panel pens. It was not unusual for livestock staff to be in a meeting in the main building when someone called to report that the Longhorns had broken down their aluminum corrals and were starting to wander across the campus into the desert.³⁶

The Museum also began engaging in a broad range of public programs and exhibition projects during the Harris era. The first Cowboy Days took place in October 1999, followed by the debut of the first Fiesta de San Ysidro in May 2000. As its name implies, Cowboy Days commemorates the heritage of cowboys and cattle ranching, but it extends to include all livestock production, notably sheep and goats. San Ysidro was conceived to be the Museum's major farming festival, one based on the calendar around the traditional Hispanic feast day for San Ysidro, the patron saint of farming or agricultural laborers. The Museum's program usually includes a procession of a *bullo* of the saint called the "Blessing of the Fields." In the catholic faith, farmers and clergy engage in this traditional activity each spring to seek blessings and good favor for the forthcoming agricultural year. There is also historical evidence that a similar processional has been carried out by other protestant groups in New Mexico in the twentieth century. Both events seek to portray and carry on the heritage of farming, ranching, and rural life in New Mexico for today's visitors.

Shortly after coming into office, Governor Bill Richardson began designating various state buildings to honor important historic officials. Richardson concluded that Bruce King's time as governor and his role in developing the Farm & Ranch Heritage Museum would be best recognized at the Museum. As noted above, King was integral to almost all of the physical developments of the Museum, from the creation of the museum in statutes to helping secure the money to build the main building. So in August 2004 that structure was renamed as the Bruce King Building at the New Mexico Farm & Ranch Heritage Museum (fig. 10).³⁷



Fig. 10
Rededication of Main Building as
Bruce King Building, 2004,
photo courtesy of New Mexico
Farm and Ranch Museum

At the end of 2005, Mac Harris left to take a similar position at South Dakota's museum of agriculture. A national search led to the hiring of Mark Santiago, an Arizona native and Spanish colonial military historian by background. Like Way, he came to Las Cruces from the position of director of the Museum of Space History in Alamogordo. Santiago's goal as director of the Farm & Ranch Heritage Museum is to complete the vision outlined in the *Master Interpretive Plan*, revised

and updated in late 2005, and “finish” the Museum envisioned by the founders and early directors by 2012, the centennial of New Mexico statehood. This includes the development of barns, greenhouses, and other exhibit facilities on the South Twenty. He also oversaw the relocation of the Museum’s latest piece of heritage—New Mexico’s second-oldest highway bridge. The Historic Green Bridge represents a new facet of the interpretation of rural life in New Mexico, an emphasis on how transportation has played a critical role in the movement of farm products and the development and spread of New Mexico lifestyles.

This year the Museum enters its second decade open to the public interpreting New Mexico’s agricultural heritage. It has firmly established itself as one of the leading and most advanced museums in Southern New Mexico. It also has a well-earned reputation for preserving the artifacts and oral histories of that heritage. The Museum regularly works with the NMSU Archives & Special Collections, the modern home of the Rio Grande Historical Collections, to collect and make historical records and photographs, as well as all the Oral History Program’s interviews, available to researchers. Gerald Thomas’ and William Stephens’ thirty year-old concerns about the loss of agricultural heritage are today largely a thing of the past. The Museum continues to expand its offering of exhibits, workshops, public programs, and school and adult group tours, showing slow and steady growth in its annual attendance figures, even in times of decreasing attendance in other museums nation- and statewide. And you will still hear the twenty-year old rallying cry, “So the Future May Know” — so it may know of the important heritage of farming, ranching, and rural life in New Mexico.

Dr. Cameron L. Saffell has been Curator of History at the Farm & Ranch Heritage Museum since 1999, where he is responsible for the Institutional Archives, the Oral History Program, and historical research for exhibit and program development. This historical overview is based on a talk given in September 2007 to the local Oral History Club.

Endnote

¹ Gerald Thomas, Interview by Jane O’Cain, 20 November 1996, F&RHM Oral History Program (hereafter cited as Thomas Oral History), Tape One, Side A. The author has utilized transcripts of this and all other oral history interviews used in this article, which are available to other researchers at the NMSU Archives & Special Col-

lections, Las Cruces, N.M.; Gerald W Thomas, *The Academic Ecosystems: Issues Emerging in a University Environment* (Las Cruces, N.M.: G. W. Thomas, 1998), 307.

² Thomas Oral History, Tape One, Side A.

- 3 Ibid.
- 4 Gerald W. Thomas, "Heritage of Honor: New Mexico's Agricultural Heritage: A Tribute to William P. (Bill) Stephens," *Southern New Mexico Historical Review* 5 (1998): 35. The director position today is known as the state's Secretary of Agriculture.
- 5 Evan Leland, "State Agricultural History Museum in Works," *Las Cruces Sun-News*, 6 April 1987; Sue Major Holmes, "Museum to Tell Story of New Mexico Agriculture: NMSU is Proposed Site for Farm and Ranch Museum," *Las Cruces Sun-News*, 27 September 1987; Julia Aicher, "Ag Museum May Bear Fruit," *Las Cruces Sun-News*, 28 December 1988.
- 6 Thomas Oral History Tape One, Sides A and B; G. X. McSherry, Interview by Jane O'Cain, 9 October 1996, F&RHM Oral History Program (hereafter cited as McSherry Oral History), Tape One, Side B.
- 7 Thomas Oral History, Tape One, Sides A and B.
- 8 Ibid., Tape One, Side B. The original proposed museum site is the location where the new Las Cruces Center is being constructed.
- 9 Thomas Oral History Tape One, Side B. Governor Garrey Carruthers added his support in for the project in July 1988. William P. Stephens, "New Mexico Farm and Ranch Heritage Institute Foundation History," New Mexico Farm & Ranch Heritage Museum vertical file, F&RHM library, Las Cruces, N.M., p. 2.
- 10 This was at the same time Naumer and others were pursuing the creation of what became the Hispanic Cultural Center in Albuquerque. Thomas Oral History, Tape One, Side B; McSherry Oral History, Tape One, Side B.
- 11 McSherry Oral History, Tape One, Side B; Stephens, "New Mexico Farm," 3.
- 12 Farm and Ranch Heritage Museum Act, *New Mexico Statutes Annotated*, chapt. 18, sect. 11 et seq. (1991).
- 13 "Preserves Rural History," *El Paso Times*, 11 February 1989; "Our City Deserves Heritage Institute," *Las Cruces Sun-News*, 19 February 1989; Bruce King, Interview by Cameron L. Saffell, 3 August 2004, F&RHM Oral History Program, Tape One, Side A; Morgan Nelson, personal communication; Farm and Ranch Heritage Museum Act; Erik Ness, "New Mexico Insight," [Fort Summer] *De Baca County News*, 2 February 1989; Stephens, "New Mexico Farm," 3.
- 14 Thomas Oral History, Tape One, Sides A and B; McSherry Oral History, Tape Two, Side A.
- 15 Yetta Bidegain, Interview by Jane O'Cain, 13 May 1996, F&RHM Oral History Program, Tape One, Side A; Farm & Ranch Heritage Museum Board, Minutes of the Board Meeting, 30 November 1992.
- 16 Stephens, "New Mexico Farm," 2-3; *New Mexico Farm & Ranch* 46(3) (March 1991): 14; "Heritage Institute a Top Priority" *New Mexico Farm & Ranch* 44(1) (January 1989): 14.
- 17 "Cultural Affairs Appoints Farm and Ranch Museum Director," *Heritage New Mexico* 4 (Fall 1992): 2; Tom McCalmont, Interview by Michelle Nawrocki, 21 March 1996, F&RHM Oral History Program (hereafter cited as McCalmont Oral History), Tape One.
- 18 McCalmont Oral History, Tape One; McSherry Oral History, Tape One, Side A; Rachael Rodgers, "Museum Visionary Stephens Dies at 73," *Las Cruces Sun-News*, 2 October 1993.
- 19 McCalmont Oral History, Tape One; J. Edson Way, Interview by Cameron L. Saffell, 11 March 2005, F&RHM Oral History Program (hereafter cited as Way Oral History), Tape One, Side A.
- 20 It is unclear why early sources indicate this was a fifteen-acre site while later sources say eleven acres. It is possible that some of the land along the southern periphery could not be built upon because of flood easements associated with Tortugas Dam. It also may have

- included an allowance for a parking area.
- 21 Farm & Ranch Heritage Museum Board, Minutes of the Board Meeting, 6 October and 16 November 1994.
- 22 Ben Neary "State Accused of Rigging Procedures," *Albuquerque Journal*, [16?] December 1993; Ben Neary, "Santa Fe Firm Wins 2nd Bid to Build Farm Museum," *Albuquerque Journal*, 7 January 1994; Ben Neary, "War of Words Menaces Museums Plan," *Albuquerque Journal*, 19 February 1994; Scott Sandlin, "Museum Plans Continue: Judge Denies Request for Hold on Contract," *Albuquerque Journal*, 8 July 1994.
- 23 Fritz Thompson, "Cowboys, Tractor Turn Dirt for New Museum," *Albuquerque Journal*, 6 August 1995; Steve Sexton, "From the Ground Up: Movers, Shakers Gather in Honor of Farm Museum," *Las Cruces Sun-News*, 13 August 1995.
- 24 Robert (Bob) Hart, personal communication; Morton-Davidson photographs, 1995F.124 through .126, Institutional Archives, F&RHM Library, Las Cruces, N.M.
- 25 Way Oral History, Tape 3, Sides A and B. The author was another student staff member at the RHC when these events took place and was present in the initial discussions about seeing if the Museum would take the animals.
- 26 Hart, personal communication.
- 27 Dave Harkness, personal communication; Hazel Stephens visits construction site photographs, 1996.0260B to .0263B, Institutional Archives, F&RHM Library, Las Cruces, N.M.
- 28 Harkness and J. Edson Way, personal communications.
- 29 Personal communications with early Museum staff members.
- 30 Hart, Toni Laumbach, Jane O'Cain, Lisa Pugh, and Darrol Shillingburg (all early staff members), personal communications.
- 31 Jane O'Cain (curator of "From the Grassroots"), personal communication.³² O'Cain, personal communication. The author became the director of the Oral History Program when O'Cain left the Museum in 2001.
- 33 "Generations" exhibit, F&RHM, Las Cruces, N.M.; "Generations" curatorial team, personal communications. In addition to its authenticity, Laumbach says the pithouse structure, built by Bill Cook, is one of the most solid and secure places in the Museum. Laumbach has said that if a tornado warning is ever issued, she will take refuge inside the pithouse. Cook earned himself a job as exhibit fabricator as a result of his attention to detail on this project.
- 34 "Generations" exhibit; "Generations" curatorial team, personal communications. The stone work was built on a cinder-block foundation (visible in fig. 9) directly on the cement floor; the exhibit platform was later built around it.
- 35 Way Oral History, Tape Two, Side B and Tape Three, Side B.
- 36 Harris would want it duly noted that these developments merely took place on his watch; the hardworking staff of the Museum carried the serious legwork. This included the author, who was hired in the first few days of Harris' directorial tenure.
- 37 "Governor Richardson Adds Bruce King's Name to Museum," *New Mexico Farm & Ranch Heritage News* 6(1) (Fall 2004): 4-5.

BRINGING CIVILIZATION TO THE WILD WEST: THE WOMEN'S IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION OF LAS CRUCES

Stacie Pritchett

Introduction

In Las Cruces, during the summer of 1894, the wife of a college professor at the New Mexico College of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts died. At that time, Las Cruces had no hearse, so bodies were moved in a coal wagon. "There were five ladies riding behind an old wagon which was usually used for hauling coal and wood but, today it was taking one of their dear friends to her final resting place. They vowed, then and there, to form a club, and through this club buy a hearse for Las Cruces."¹ These five women met and organized the Women's Improvement Association (WIA) on 4 June 1894, and filed formal Articles of Incorporation on 13 June 1894. The Articles stated that the objectives of the club were:

*general improvement in and about the town of Las Cruces, New Mexico, by the purchase, construction, laying out and erection of public buildings, parks, libraries, cemeteries, hearses, and other beneficial, useful, ornamental and charitable improvements. To own, hold, sell, convey and mortgage real estate and personal property necessary for the carrying out of the purpose of this corporation.*²

New Mexico was not yet a state, so there was very little tax money to pay for civic projects. The goal of the WIA was to provide for the people of Las Cruces and the Mesilla Valley what government could not. Over the years, the women raised money and worked to reduce the shocking infant mortality rate which was 250% higher than the national average.³ They also built the city's first library and the city's first park. At the dedication of the park in 1898, the women gave speeches in both English and Spanish telling all assembled that the park was meant to be used by all races and classes of citizens.⁴ The women of the WIA helped shape the early history of the town, and continued to help Las Cruces throughout the twentieth century. This paper examines the WIA from its formation through the 1930s. There are many great sources of information about the WIA, but some are difficult to find, and others seem to contradict each other due to the complexity of the subjects or because of changing terminology used throughout the years. This paper serves as a resource guide to anyone who wants to learn more about the early history of the WIA.

Formation of the Women's Improvement Association of Las Cruces

The original five members elected were Mary McFie President; Emma Dawson, Vice President; Katie Reymond, Treasurer; Ida

M. Llewellyn, Secretary; and Emelia Ascarate.⁵ At first, WIA club membership was limited to fifteen women, then in 1897 the limit was raised to twenty women.⁶ Missing any of the club meetings without a good excuse cost members twenty-five cents, and if a member missed three meetings she would be dismissed from the club and someone else could take her place.⁷ Taking the Women's Improvement Association initials "WIA", club members' husbands nicknamed the group the "Wild Irish Association."⁸ The Las Cruces WIA joined the National Federation of Women's Clubs in 1897, making it one of the oldest federated clubs in the Southwest.⁹

The following article appeared in the *Rio Grande Republican*, precursor to the *Las Cruces Sun News*, on 9 September 1910.

*The women of the W.I.A. were the first to take up the improvement of Las Cruces. They began by [buying] a hearse for the town, then a sprinkling wagon and next they undertook the purchase of the grounds and the making of our park. By their own efforts they have raised the money giving entertainments, teas, etc. to buy the block of land, erect the buildings, plant the trees, shrubbery and grass and have also maintained the park for years. Now they feel that their labors are over and are offering the park for sale. It is up to the city to buy this park and take care of it.*¹⁰

Although the women were trying to sell the park to the city in 1910, the city did not actually buy the park until 1924. Until then, the club continued to raise money to maintain the park, while also working to improve the city in other ways. This was the story of the development of much of Las Cruces—the WIA provided and maintained civic improvement until the government could afford to take over. Along with the first park, the WIA built the first library, worked to improve medical care, provide child care, and improve sanitation. The history of the city helps to provide a background to understand why the need for such an organization was so great.

History of the Las Cruces Area

Civilization sprang up in the Mesilla Valley so rapidly that Las Cruces and Doña Ana experienced intense growing pains. While the valley was rich in arable land and sat astride an important trade route, international politics kept the area empty until the mid 1800s. In the early 1800s, the land which is now New Mexico was part of Mexico, and Mexico was still a colony of Spain. Therefore, the lucrative trade along the road from Chihuahua to Santa Fe, the Camino Real, was under Spanish control. Spain did not allow Americans to trade with merchants on the Camino Real, but in 1821, Mexico won its independence, and decided to open up the trade route to America. By 1822 merchants from Missouri came to trade in Santa Fe, forming the Santa Fe Trail,

which brought needed revenue to the young country of Mexico.¹¹ To make another place for merchants to rest along the route and to bring more stability to the area, Mexico decided to establish a town in the area five miles north of present day Las Cruces. They granted land to thirty settlers, who migrated to the area in January 1843, and named their colony Doña Ana. These colonists struggled to survive in the uncultivated valley until April 1843, when they completed an irrigation ditch and successfully planted crops. By 1844, the population had grown to 216 people, who cultivated 35,000 acres of farmland.¹²

From 1846 until 1848, Mexico and America fought over land and remaining debts which Mexico owed America from the Mexican Revolution. At the end of the war in 1848, Mexico ceded the land of New Mexico to the United States.¹³ American settlers came to Doña Ana, and fights for land broke out between the new American settlers and the earlier residents of Doña Ana. The population was too high for the small town to support. (There is no census data available from 1848, but a census from 1850 shows that the area had a population of approximately three thousand, making it the largest trading center between San Antonio, Texas and San Diego, California.)

Because the influx of new settlers to Doña Ana was disrupting the peace, the earlier residents of Doña Ana petitioned the American government, asking that the government establish a separate town in the region to offer an alternative area for immigrants to the valley to live.¹⁴ In 1849, U.S. Army Lt. Delos Bennett Sachet surveyed the valley and chose a location along the irrigation ditch that was far enough away from the farmers of Doña Ana to prevent fights over land already claimed. He divided the land of the town among 120 settlers, who quickly moved in and set up a city.¹⁵

Las Cruces was designed in a way that would facilitate traders traveling along the Santa Fe Trail to stop along the way. It was also designed to defend against raids by Mescalero-Apaches, who had been raiding trade wagons in Doña Ana:

In the early years the town's tallest building of two stories, a general store on the southwest corner of Las Cruces and Maine Streets, served as a watchtower for the early warning of the approach of hostiles. Apaches were greatly feared but were never the problem they were for Doña Ana or Mesilla. The freight wagons in town were not the temptation that they were on the road and the village was well built for defense with continuous front walls along the streets. It would have been necessary to go along these streets, where any door or window might hold a rifle.¹⁶

Las Cruces grew so quickly that the town's infrastructure was vastly insufficient. In 1881, the first railroad was built and the first train came to town. This made it easier for immigrants to come from the Eastern United States. In 1880, the population of the town was 1,685, and by 1890 the population had grown to 2,340.¹⁷ Many people came from the Eastern United States, seeking the hot, dry climate of the Southwest to cure their tuberculosis. Doctors from the eastern United

States published studies in that New Mexico was the best place to go to cure tuberculosis, claiming “there does not exist a better or more ideal climate for the elimination of disease and the restoration of health.” Estimates show that from 1910 to 1930, approximately one in five New Mexicans were here for health reasons. They came to a frontier town which was not very civilized, but when their illnesses were cured, many of them chose to stay in town instead of returning to the East.¹⁸

Several prominent members of the WIA came from the east, some for health reasons. But by the time they were healed, they had developed relationships in Las Cruces and did not want to leave. Instead, they worked hard to make Las Cruces a better place to live, and to bring the community together.¹⁹ A Sun News article about the history of the WIA from 1939 sums the situation up well: “The early days of this town were no bed of roses for the woman who migrated here from the east. At first, she was more or less at a loss as to what to do about it. The conditions were naturally harder on her than the men. But she did not pick up her skirts and flee; she set to work to improve the conditions, and in true feminine fashion, stubbornly stuck it out.”²⁰ A good example of this is Mrs. Frenger, who came to Las Cruces in 1898. She was a graduate of the Berlin conservatory, where she studied under Franz Liszt. She was an active WIA member who taught at the university, helped establish local radio, and taught private music lessons.²¹

Major Club Projects

The City's First Park

WIA members agreed to focus on building either a library or a park, and the majority voted to build a park, because at that time the houses of Las Cruces did not have yards, and so the children had nowhere to play but the streets.²² WIA members bought the land and planted grass and trees, and in 1896 “Union Park” opened. Now known as “Pioneer Park” it is located at 500 West Las Cruces Avenue. The park provided a “focal point for auspicious moments in the history of the village, as it grew into a town and then a city.”²³

By 1898 the trees of the park were growing leaves and grass covered most of the park, and the club members decided to buy a pavilion and bandstand for the park, because, “...this was the era of band concerts and no town of any size could dare be without a bandstand.” The pavilion was used for band concerts, public oratory, and political rallies. WIA members enclosed one wing of the pavilion to use as their meeting place. In one of the rooms, they stored good books and magazines which they had collected, and people who came to the park could read in this room.²⁴

For the official dedication of Union Park in 1898, the WIA threw a Fourth of July party for all of Las Cruces and the surrounding

areas. The WIA orchestrated the events of the night, which included speeches, fireworks, songs by a chorus and band, and speeches about the WIA and how they intended for the park to serve the town. The following article from 1898 speaks of the night's events: "It had been announced the program would begin early, so the crowd appeared early, and in short time it seemed the town had turned out en masse, everyone appearing interested upon this occasion." The article recounts the night's events, and summarizes the speeches given at the park:

[Mr. Day] gave an outline of the aim and objective of the WIA and accredited its members with a desire to have the entire population of our town in union and accord as indicated by the naming of the park.

The idea that the park was dedicated to the use by all classes of citizens was dwelt upon by both English and Spanish speakers of the evening, and the native Mexicans were given to understand that the park and its accessories were intended for their enjoyment as well as that of others.²⁵

The park served a special function in early Las Cruces. Before people could listen to radios, and long before television, band concerts served as a central form of entertainment and socialization in America. The WIA hosted many evening summer band concerts in the park, often serving ice cream, cooling Las Cruces down at a time when ice was hard to come by and air conditioning was nonexistent. WIA members 'families helped with the festivities: "Husbands cracked ice, turned cranks and helped with the dishes until the wee small hours. They loyally supported every activity of the 'Wild Irish Association,' as they dubbed the organization. Small sons vended lemonade; daughters lent helping hands."²⁶

The City's First Hearse

By 1901 the club had raised enough money to order a horse-drawn hearse and harness from St. Louis. Finally, they had accomplished the mission that had originally brought their club together.²⁷ Still looking forward to future improvements they planned for Las Cruces, they rented out the hearse and set the money aside for other projects. They let people rent the hearse for a fee of ten dollars for use in town, and fifteen dollars for use outside of town limits.²⁸

The Street Sprinkler

In those days, Las Cruces was so small that the streets were not paved. They were " ...little more than wagon ruts [which] were always ankle deep in dust and sand," and on windy days the sand from the streets swept across the entire town, so the women of the WIA bought a road sprinkler for the town.²⁹ Until the streets were paved the city used the sprinkler to keep the dust down and to compact the dirt surfaces of the streets so that rain would not erode them as badly.³⁰ During those

hot days before air conditioning, "When the wagon came down the streets children of the community followed it, getting liberally sprinkled in the process."³¹

The WIA Clubhouse-Library

The husbands of the married WIA members always supported their wives. Seeing husband's reactions to their wives' work gives a good picture of how the sense of community of Las Cruces developed. Many husbands of WIA members were prominent in the community, and worked together with their wives for community improvement. Herbert Yeo, local historian, photographer, and flood expert was the husband of a WIA member. In history papers he wrote, he mentioned the importance of the WIA. He was especially interested in how the street sprinkler the WIA operated prevented ground erosion during the early days before the streets were paved. He was also impressed by the women's ingenuity in raising funds through events they held at the park "... the expense of beautifying and fencing the park was assumed by the club. A pavilion was erected in the center of the park where numerous social events were held, many of which were benefits for the maintenance of the park and the upkeep of the horse and sprinkling wagon."³²

In 1924 the City of Las Cruces took over the maintenance of the park, and this freed the club members to spend their time and money building a clubhouse and working to get a library for the town. At this time, the WIA had already collected 500 books for the library they were hoping to build. Although they had not yet built a library, they had been providing library services to Las Cruces for years. The WIA members had been storing these books in several rooms around town where club members took turns volunteering as librarians.³³ Along with the stringent attendance rules of the WIA, club projects took much of the women's time. Club members' husbands were understanding in accommodating their wives' busy schedules.

Along with his historic appreciation of the hard work and sacrifice of WIA members, Mr. Yeo also had firsthand experience of the WIA's determination through observing his wife. Mrs. Yeo was the chairman of the building committee of the WIA clubhouse. It became clear during the 1920s that the WIA could not raise enough money to build a free public library. However, having a library for Las Cruces was very important to WIA members, perhaps because so many citizens of Las Cruces were tuberculosis patients who had to spend much of their time in bed, so the WIA members sacrificed their clubhouse and made it into a temporary library. Mrs. Yeo worked with library committee chairman, Alice Branigan to make the clubhouse suitable as a library. The WIA clubhouse-library was very beautifully constructed. An article from the Las Cruces Citizen from 1927 praises the clubhouse-library:

“The new public library was opened to the public this week. Open house will be held January 2...The building is of interlocking tiles, faced with stucco, with a wide, deep verandah, deep blue frames and sash, and a shield bearing the notice, Public Library W.I.A.”

Some people called it the clubhouse-library, but most Las Cruces simply referred to the WIA clubhouse as “the library.” To raise the money to stock it with books and pay for full-time librarians, WIA members had to take out several loans, but they still needed more money, so they raised funds by holding community events. They held balls, ice cream socials, oyster suppers, and held auctions at the Fair for various items (including a \$250 bull) which community members had donated to support their cause. When the clubhouse-library opened, the WIA charged one dollar per year to each family that used the library as there was no tax money to maintain a free library.³⁴

The City’s First Free, Public Library

Alice Montgomery was one of the charter members of the WIA, and the first member to suggest building a permanent, free, public library Las Cruces would have gone much longer without a library if it had not been for Alice’s contributions. Alice was born in Topeka, Kansas in 1872. She worked as a school teacher in Kansas, then moved to Las Cruces, New Mexico to improve her health. She was involved in many clubs and was a talented musician. She married Captain Thomas Branigan on 1 June 1897.³⁵ Alice continued her work as a school teacher in Las Cruces, and her husband became a school board member. She also worked in the local post office where Thomas was postmaster.³⁶ Alice was a committed member of the WIA, and was the club treasurer for thirteen years.³⁷

The women of the WIA were often connected to important events in local history. A year before Alice married Thomas Branigan, she shared in the sorrow of fellow WIA member Mariana Fountain, wife of the late Albert Fountain and mother of Henry Fountain. Everyone knew Albert Fountain had enemies who wanted to kill him, and Mariana urged him not to make a trip to Lincoln, but when he insisted, she asked him to take their son, believing that no one would kill a child. When news arrived that Albert and Henry were missing, citizens of Las Cruces mounted a search campaign. Thomas Branigan joined the search party, aided by the knowledge of the land he had gained as Captain of Scouts of the Mescalero-Apaches, but after extensive searching, Albert and Henry were never found.³⁸ Alice and Thomas Branigan were a good match. Both were dedicated, tenacious, giving people. Thomas Branigan died in the fall of 1925. His obituary ran in a local paper and read in part:

His dear wife and helpmate, who has also been identified with the community life, both civic and moral, can take consolation in the fact that “Old Captain” had marched bravely to his reward...The

*community has lost a faithful and loyal citizen, always ready to do his part, and we join his bereaved wife in her sorrow, hoping that she will take comfort in the fact that she is not alone, but that we all mourn with her and share her loss.*³⁹

Alice Branigan died in October 1932, she was buried next to Thomas Branigan in the Independent Order of Odd Fellows Cemetery.⁴⁰ In her will left the city of Las Cruces 35,000 dollars to build a public library to be named after her late husband, Thomas Branigan. She also left the WIA 2,500 dollars to pay off their debts on the clubhouse-library. Some of Alice Branigan's money had been given to her by her brother, who was the Spanish Royal Family's dentist. He had planned to come to New Mexico when he retired, but he died on his way from Spain.⁴¹ The library was built in the years 1934-1935 at 106 W. Hadley. El Paso's Percy McGhee was hired to design the building.⁴² Percy McGhee was born in Waco, Texas, on 15 June 1860. After completing his education in Waco, he spent four years working in Austin, Texas, then moved to El Paso. He held several positions in El Paso, including that of county clerk, and president of the YMCA.⁴³ Percy McGhee designed the library in a modified Southwest pueblo style, a style which was the idea of E.G. Shannon, a chairman of the board of trustees of Branigan properties.⁴⁴ It was such a good design that in 1938 it was put on the list of twenty-four small libraries in the nation that were examples of beautiful structures.⁴⁵ When the Branigan Library opened in 1935, the WIA closed the clubhouse-library and donated their books to the Branigan Library.⁴⁶ Since 1935 the clubhouse has not been needed as a library, and it has been used as a clubhouse for WIA members, and they have rented out rooms to community and private organizations, giving the building "a niche in the memory of many Las Cruces as the site of weddings or receptions, balls and civic and political debates."⁴⁷

Child Welfare Problems

It is more dangerous to be an infant in New Mexico than in any other state of the union, and Doña Ana County's death rate is as high as that for the state as a whole."

This statement is from a 1936 report by the WIA Civic Cooperation Committee.⁴⁸ Records show that in the 1930s, the infant mortality rate in Doña Ana was 250% higher than the national average. This was caused by poor sanitation, contaminated water, and quick-killing communicable diseases, which took the highest toll on infants. Gastrointestinal diseases were twenty-six *times* higher than the national average.⁴⁹ New Mexico clubwomen had been aware that diseases had been rampant in New Mexico since before statehood, and did all they could to help. In the 1914 copy of the New Mexico Federation of Women's Clubs Bulletin, clubwomen call for keeping better records of

births and deaths, increasing medical inspection in schools, and offering lectures on sanitation. They also plead with medical authorities and scientists to help discover the causes of epidemics, as resources were often diverted elsewhere: “We are all students, we wish to learn how to prevent disease, and how to conserve human life. It is, however, with a feeling of humiliation that we note in New Mexico that adequate provision has been made for a Sanitary Sheep Board and also a Cattle Board; we note how quickly an expert is sent into our midst upon the least suspicion of hog cholera.”⁵⁰

Many doctors and medical experts tried to place blame on mothers, insisting that the main problem was New Mexican’s reliance on giving birth with the help of midwives instead of going to a hospital. However, there were no hospitals in southern New Mexico, and most residents could not reach the hospital in El Paso in time, as most had no cars, and could not have afforded hospital bills even if they could. There was not a permanent hospital in Las Cruces until 1950. A temporary hospital was established in 1937, and operated for several years until health authorities discovered raw sewage running under the operating room. And even at its maximum capacity it only had seven beds, and was very expensive.⁵¹

Some doctors saw midwives as competition, and tried to undermine their status through legislation. In 1921, when New Mexico was finally able to receive federal funds through the Sheppard-Towner Act, many state authorities argued that this was a violation of separate state authority. The American Medical Association and the American Obstetrical Society opposed the bill on grounds that lay people should gain “control” of medical matters by allocating money.⁵²

In 1934 the Children’s Bureau obtained federal and state funding to improve maternity and child health services. Finally, the experts the clubwomen had been asking for so many years came to New Mexico and conducted health investigations. These experts discovered that one of the main reasons that diseases were spreading among New Mexicans was the lack of sanitary toilets, as most New Mexicans were using outhouses that were not built to keep out flies.⁵³ Finally New Mexico clubwomen knew what had to be done. They worked to raise money and awareness, and along with the WPA, built over 1,200 fly-proof toilets. The WIA members paid the five-dollar charge for any family that could not afford five dollars for access to these toilets.⁵⁴ Throughout the 1930s, the WIA operated a well-child clinic that provided free checkups for those families who could not afford it, and operated a six-day nursery school to help working mothers.⁵⁵

While some men saw powerful women’s clubs as a threat, there were many men who always supported them. Starting in 1910, New Mexico clubwomen lobbied to create a Child Welfare Service, and in

1919 it was established. In 1921 the Congress of the United States passed a bill called the Sheppard-Towner Act, which granted federal money to help alleviate the severe public health problems in New Mexico. The head of the hygiene division of the state Bureau of Public Health wanted control of the funds, but clubwomen wanted money for the underfunded Child Welfare Service, partly to alleviate the high infant mortality rate. Eventually a truce had to be legislated. In 1921 New Mexico's Child Welfare Service and Child Welfare Board merged with the state Bureau of Public Health to create a state Department of Public Welfare. Federal funds would be split between the three components of the newly formed Bureau.⁵⁶

By this time many male politicians and policy makers saw how effective women could be when it came to creating policies that affected the welfare of children. To safeguard this benefit for New Mexico, a law was passed that stated that the director of the Child Welfare division of the state Department of Public Welfare had to be a woman who had experience and special training in child welfare work. Also, at least two, but no more than three members of the board of the Department of Public Welfare had to be women. This is one of the examples of how the clubwomen of New Mexico rose to positions usually dominated by men. These women were so competent as to be indispensable.⁵⁷

During the Great Depression, the Women's Improvement Association was deep in debt, and on the verge of foreclosure. However, the women did not stop working to help the people of Las Cruces. They worked to pave streets, install traffic lights at busy corners, and provide playground equipment for the park. They also leased twenty vacant lots for needy families to use as vegetable gardens. These provided food for 13 families with 56 children.⁵⁸

Hard Times: Lack of Funds Force Temporarily Closing Park, 1908

While looking at a list of WIA projects shows how much the women achieved, a list of accomplishments never show how hard the WIA had to work for the town. While always looking to future projects, the WIA had to maintain the projects and services they had already established. When the club was new, the women occasionally asked for donations, but by 1908 they had been raising all of their own money for several years. Club members had already donated all of their personal money they had to give, and had not raised any costs for their services, even though inflation had risen since the time they started offering them. By 1908 they were not making enough money to keep up with everything, so they had to close the park. The WIA wrote an article in the newspaper to explain why they were forced to close the park. The article also explains that some business people were refusing to pay for the services of the sprinkling wagon, forcing the WIA into debt. It gives a brief history of the WIA for the recent immigrants to Las Cruces,

and to explain to the town why their funds had run dry. As the article explains, the WIA had spent most of the \$10,000 dollars it had raised since its formation on the building and upkeep of the park.

To water the grass, trees, and shrubs of the park, the WIA had to buy an expensive windmill and piping. (The Elephant Butte Dam was not yet built, so the water from the Rio Grande was only available to Las Cruces sporadically) To cater parties they held at the park, the WIA bought chairs, tables, linens, freezers, stoves, and dishes for the park. They had to pay a full time park gardener, and a night watchman after several thefts occurred in the park. By 1908 the upkeep of the park cost \$35 per month (approximately \$4,710 today).⁵⁹ The article also explained that while the WIA was part of the National Federation of Women's Clubs (NFWC), they received no financial assistance from the federation. While

it would be a reasonable assumption that during a time of financial problems, the WIA could cut expenses at events they hosted, some people criticized them even for an honest misjudgment of how much ice cream they should serve. An article from the summer of 1908 in the Rio Grande Republican describes the first concert of that summer.

The opening band concert of the summer season was given at the park Thursday evening, when nearly the entire population of our town turned out to hear the music. The W.I.A. ladies served ice cream early in the evening but the supply was not nearly equal to the demand, and it is suggested that next time they prepare a supply several times that of this occasion. The music was good, the night was fun, and everyone wanted ice cream. Try again, ladies.⁶⁰

At the 1908 Fourth of July party, the WIA did serve more ice cream, but were only able to sell half of it. There was not a large enough freezer to store the rest, so it melted. Because of this, the WIA did not raise enough money through ice cream sales money to pay the band, and were forced to take out a loan to pay them. Along with social reasons for keeping up the services the town had come to depend on were more serious health and welfare concerns. By 1908, some merchants were refusing to pay for the service of the sprinkler wagon, which was costing the WIA \$100 per month (approximately \$13,450 today).⁶¹ The 1908 article explaining the WIA's financial situation reminds people how the city had been before the sprinkling wagon: No one can forget the dense clouds of dust when it was impossible to see across Main Street, much less to breathe."⁶² However, they explained that without merchants paying for the sprinkler, they could no longer pay to run it, even though increased traffic along Main Street was causing more and more road damage. "Main street was never in worse condition. What would it be without sprinkling? Shall we go back to the old days of swallowing dust and germs and wading ankle deep in sand? It is up to the people to decide."⁶³ Incomplete records of local newspapers prevent building a complete picture of how this situation was resolved. The earliest WIA

club meeting minutes currently available in archives begin in 1909, and show that the park was reopened.⁶⁴

By 1910 the WIA was advertising selling the park to the city, but it was not sold until 1924, and by then the WIA was in debt. WIA members, afraid the city might eventually build something else on the land of the park made a special agreement to keep this from happening. In return for keeping it a park, the city insisted that the WIA continue to pay to keep the park watered, and "It is an agreement that rises like a ghost frequently to haunt the club custodians." Another part of the deal states that the park will be returned to the WIA if the city no longer wants it. When the city took over the park, they renamed it "Pioneer Park."⁶⁵

By 1908 the hearse was also costing the WIA more money than it was making them. They were still charging only ten dollars to use the hearse, while upkeep of the horses was costing the women more due to inflation. They also had trouble collecting money from some people. Club minutes from 1909 show great losses. There are several entries indicating that families of the deceased could not pay the bill for the rental they had used, but promised to pay the bill within the following months. At this point, the hearse was costing the WIA more money than it was bringing them. By 1911 the WIA donated the hearse, harness, and coffin straps to the town of Las Cruces.⁶⁶

WIA and Other Women's Clubs Form the New Mexico Federation of Women's Clubs

The Las Cruces WIA joined the National Federation of Women's Clubs in 1897, making it one of the oldest federated clubs in the Southwest.⁶⁷ In 1905 the NFWC appointed a committee of women from the four women's clubs in New Mexico to keep in contact with the NFWC. Mrs. Frenger of the WIA saw that state-wide federations of women's clubs were very effective in states which had them, and she decided it would be a good idea for the territory of New Mexico to have a federation.⁶⁸

The first meeting of New Mexico women's clubs was held in Las Cruces on 13 March 1911, and the purpose of the meeting was to discuss federation. Seventeen clubs came to the meeting. There were two clubs from Las Cruces (the WIA and the Wednesday Club), two clubs from Portales (the Mothers Club and the Portales Woman's Club), along with clubs from Albuquerque, Artesia, Clovis, Las Vegas, Lake Arthur, Lakewood, La Mesa, Roswell, Santa Fe, Santa Rosa, Silver City, Tucumcari, and Tularosa. These clubs moved to federate, and because of her efforts to bring these groups together, Mrs. Frenger was unanimously elected as the first president. However, she believed that she could do more good as the General Federation State Secretary than she could as the president, so she handed the presidency to Mrs. S. P.

Johnson of Roswell.⁶⁹ By 1915 the NMFWC was made of thirty-five clubs, with a combined membership of approximately 1,500 women.⁷⁰

History of United States Women's Clubs

The women's club movement began in America around the year 1800. These clubs had many different purposes. Many were formed as charitable organizations. Quaker women formed America's first women's charity organization, the "Friendly Circle," in 1795. Other organizations soon followed. In 1797 Isabella Marshall Graham formed the New York Society for the Relief of Poor Widows and Small Children, and "by 1818, her organization had relieved 11,977 sick poor."⁷¹

Such charitable organizations were called benevolence associations. These clubs grew and flourished all around the country. In large cities, clubs were often broken up into several districts to streamline operations. Working in some of these districts was very dangerous, as the poorest neighborhoods experienced high crime rates, prostitution, drunkenness, and rampant diseases such as cholera, tuberculosis, typhoid fever, and diphtheria. Benevolence associations differed in methods based on regional needs, but all followed the same basic structure. They raised money through annual dues of club members, through fund raising and donation, and in some cases through legislative grants.⁷²

During the mid 1800s, the American population was growing rapidly. Industrialization and immigration, especially to large factory cities, caused problems of overcrowding, poor working and living conditions, and social tension within the rapidly changing society. While overall living standards continued to rise, the lower classes faced severe hardship. Inadequate government response to the social and economic conditions drove concerned citizens to take matters into their own hands. By the late 1800s, thousands of volunteers joined together to alleviate problems the government could not or would not address.⁷³

Groups started out as small associations focusing on alleviating problems of poor sanitation and housing conditions, crime, alcoholism, and other problems which they saw in their communities. Men joined men's groups, women joined women's groups, and there were also groups open to both genders. Often men's groups worked with women's groups when they shared a common goal. "Because so many problems faced the fledgling republic, men welcomed the volunteerism of women, and because women were thought to be morally superior to men, men allowed them to push the bounds of their private sphere to the periphery of men's public sphere. Women claimed social spaces of their own and created programs to manage them."⁷⁴

During the Civil War thousands of women in both the North and the South volunteered to aid the soldiers. Women's war relief organizations formed and worked to improve sanitation in hospitals, barracks, and ships. By the end of the war in 1865, the Sanitary Commission con-

sisted of seven thousand societies. After the war was over, these groups applied their newly learned sanitation and first aid skills to help the poor in their communities.⁷⁵ In the 1800s many people believed that women's experience in running their homes gave them better understanding of how to improve run-down areas within cities. Indeed, as women knew from experience what was needed to safely run households and take care of small children, they were able to better understand the importance of things such as running water, well-ventilated living spaces, safe staircases, and places for children to play. People believed that women were natural caretakers, so they extended their realm of caretaking to include helping the community.

A common belief of the time was that women were naturally more moral, pacifistic, and caring than men. Many of these groups used such terminology as propaganda to justify their stepping into the "public realm." Women were able to work in what had been men's domain as planners and administrators of civic affairs as long as they were able to speak of such activities in terms of separation of gender duties. Clubwomen accepted terminology like "cult of domesticity" and "municipal housekeepers." To the modern reader this language may sound offensive, but at the time when women still could not vote, this language allowed men to accept women into certain political realms without fear of losing power.⁷⁶

Many of them thought that they could be more effective working in voluntary organizations to influence policies than they would be by voting. It was only when it became clear that many politicians were trying to take over the projects which the club members had worked hard to set up that the majority of clubwomen supported women's right to vote. By 1914 women's clubs united to push for women's suffrage. Until this time the suffrage movement was a small party that had not grown significantly for many years.⁷⁷ The Las Cruces WIA engaged in both "traditional" female roles, and in furthering the rights of women. A timeline shows that in 1917, the WIA helped the Red Cross by sewing. Also in 1917, they sent a telegram to President Wilson to pass the women's suffrage movement.⁷⁸ And during the 1930s, the WIA provided daycare for working mothers, raising the money at bake sales and a country store in their clubhouse.⁷⁹

In 1890, what was to become the largest alliance of women's clubs started bringing women's clubs throughout the country together. The NFWC was formed by Jennie June Croley, when a group of seven women in New York formed a club to "improve their minds," and to help the less fortunate. Their first goal was to promote free libraries. In 1890, this club sent out invitations to all of the other women's clubs around the country to join together and form a nation-wide or world-wide organization of women. The federation grew to consist of clubs from all 50 states and more than 45 countries around the world. The

motto for the NFWC is “Unity in Diversity.”⁸⁰

The WIA followed some of the formats of other women’s clubs, but differed in several important ways. One important element was the support of the club member’s husbands. The husbands of WIA members supported their wives in their work. In most of the nation, the club treasurers were always unmarried, because club members thought a married treasurer’s husband might try to take club money for his own use.⁸¹ However, in Las Cruces, club treasurers could be married, because WIA members’ husbands believed in what their wives were doing. Many husbands of WIA members were also active in the community, and often worked side by side with their wives. For example, Alice and Thomas Branigan worked together at Las Cruces’ first one-room post office, while also separately involved in their own work.⁸²

Another way the WIA differed from other national women’s clubs was their extra burden to provide health care. New Mexico’s lack of sanitation infrastructure and location along the Rio Grande River and irrigation canals made the state much more susceptible to infectious diseases spread by insects.

And even in areas with running water, seepage of contaminated water often poisoned resident’s water supply. Water lines crossed with sewage lines, and lack of modern piping equipment caused back siphonage: “When the undertaker embalmed a body, local residents found blood dripping from their faucets.”⁸³ While New Mexico was a good place to cure tuberculosis, overall it was much more dangerous than other states from a health standpoint.

The WIA had to work hard to keep up improvements that the rapidly rising population demanded. They provided the Mesilla Valley with places to socialize, read, and play. While the WIA tackled big projects which sprung from local needs, they worked on many smaller projects as well. To help with the heat, the WIA started the first swimming pool, and operated it for several years. They also installed drinking fountains for horses. At the turn of the 19th century, most traffic was by horse or horse drawn carriage, and these drinking fountains helped both Las Cruces and people traveling through Las Cruces. The women also cut down the mistletoe that threatened to kill the large shade trees of early Las Cruces. Industrious as always, they sold the mistletoe to pay for the town Christmas party.⁸⁴

Conclusion

The Women’s Improvement Association built many landmarks and institutions of Las Cruces. They were the most important community builders in the town’s early history, seeing the potential of Las Cruces long before the town could truly be called “civilized.” They made the Mesilla Valley a better place to live, not only for the well to

do, but also for the many poverty stricken people of the community. If these women had chosen to live somewhere else, they surely could have. But love for the community, love for a challenge, and love for each other kept them here. Even though many people do not know about these women, we are all in their debt.

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MY EARLY LIFE IN THE MESILLA VALLEY, NEW MEXICO

ELSIE RAYE RIGNEY CARR

This article is excerpted from Elsie Carr's memoir, *Elsie's Story*,
with light editing by her cousin, Walter Hines.

Childhood, 1915-1928

At the time of my childhood, New Mexico was still in a pioneer stage. My parents had graduated from New Mexico College of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts (New Mexico A&M) in 1911, one year before New Mexico became a state.

Immediately after his marriage to Mother¹ in 1913, my father Joseph Rigney² was sent to Roswell, New Mexico as the first County Agricultural Agent for Chavez County. I was born there in 1915. My brother Joe came three and a half years after me, Lois eight years, and Ruth fourteen years later.

When I was about one year, we moved back to the Mesilla Valley as my father had been offered the position of professor in the Department of Horticulture at New Mexico A&M. Mesilla Valley is a narrow agricultural oasis bordering the Rio Grande, north of the border with Mexico and Texas, just southeast of Las Cruces. To the west is a sandy mesa, on the east, the striking Organ Mountains. Every day the residents would pause in what they were doing to go out and look at the sunset light on the Organs. The old rugged peaks turn rosy pink, then shade through mauve back to pale blue, while the sky above continues to hold color into the twilight. It was a place that gave one perspective.



Joseph Rigney,
photo courtesy of Walter Hines



Elsie Raye Hines Rigney,
photo courtesy of Walter Hines

When I was three and a half, Joe was born in a hospital in El Paso, unusual for the time, since most women had their babies at home. Mother had appendicitis while pregnant with me, a great worry, so extra precaution was taken for Joe's birth. Joe was born without incident.

The first house I remember was in the edge of Old Mesilla off present day Boutz Road. Our home, known as the Gale place, was a large, historic adobe with walls 18 inches thick. All the nails used in construction



*Elsie and Joe,
photo courtesy of
Walter Hines*

were said to have been brought from the East over the Santa Fe Trail. The house was one story and the roof was mud placed

over a layer of small branches and twigs, which were supported by big, hand-hewn wooden vigas.

I liked the Gale house because the thick walls created wide window seats, and Mother let me have my paper dolls in one of these in the dining room. My paper dolls were cut-outs of ladies from the women's magazines Mother received. There were also paper-doll books sold for little girls like me. I had a big collection.

Mother did not enjoy the house as much as we children did. The roof leaked during heavy downpours and harbored "varmints." She frequently battled cockroaches, and once in a while a centipede. But it was a good house for that climate. The thick walls kept it cool in summer and held the heat in winter.

Life for all the family in that house was pretty good. Mother was happy to be near Grandmother³ and saw her often. Our house was just across the main irrigation ditch from my Grandfather's⁴ orchard. I remember walking across the double-plank bridge and along a path through the orchard to Grandmother's house. This place was very special to me, and I imagine to Joe, too. There were big mulberry trees near the house that we could climb, and the fruit trees in the orchard were fun. The two-story house seemed huge and grand. Some of my clearest childhood memories were of being at Grandmother's house. Joe and I often stayed there when Mother was visiting or when she needed to go somewhere without us.

There was a feather bed in the bedroom I was permitted to sleep in, and a wide, screened porch around two sides on the second story. I still have vivid memories of the scene from that porch. Grandmother also had a library of children's books. I read *Horatio Alger* and *Elsie Dinsmore*, both of whom I disliked. Elsie Dinsmore she was such a little Goody-goody and that spoiled my name for me.

And when Uncle Jerry,⁵ my mother's younger brother, was home he played with us. He always teased me, but I thought he was the most fun of anybody. Uncle Fred and his beloved wife lived near during those years,



*Joe and Elsie on a tricycle,
photo courtesy of Walter Hines*

and we saw him often at family gatherings. Aunt Gladys and Aunt Sadie lived there, too, their monthly room-and-board money contributing considerably to keeping the place going.

Mrs. Locke seemed like one of the Hines family. She and Mr. Locke lived in a small house across the road from Grandmother. She raised pansies, and in season picked these and shipped them to florists. When it was pansy picking time I used to go over and help her cut the blossoms. I learned a great deal about pansies. Mrs. Locke treated them as though she was very fond of them. She would point out the little faces and the distinctive characteristics of each. She usually kept a turtle, just a plain everyday land turtle, but a curiosity to me. She was a vivid character, and I still have a picture memory of her talking and can mentally hear her voice.

One summer Mother and Father took a trip to the Grand Canyon by Model T Ford mostly over dirt roads. Mother was not enthusiastic about going. Joe and I stayed at grandmother's house. I can still remember standing in the driveway watching their car disappear and the feeling I had about my mother being away for so long - three weeks. I couldn't have been older than seven because Lois was born when I was eight, and she wasn't even on the way.

Lois was born while we lived in the Gale house. I don't remember whether Mother went to a hospital. Lois was a little premature and weighed only four pounds at birth. There were no aids of the kind taken for granted now for caring for such an infant. Mother had to do it all herself. Caring for babies was difficult at best. Every Mother dreaded "the second summer," when the baby had reached a toddler stage and was eating some solid food. The heat was hard on them; they often got upset tummies, and sometimes worse. Some little one died—two of Mother's infant siblings had.

Besides Lois, Mother had other childhood illnesses to contend with. I, being the oldest, went to school first, was exposed to all the children's diseases and brought them all home to Joe and later Lois. I didn't have a very bad case of any myself, but Joe got quite sick with measles and mumps and chicken pox. One summer Mother was taking care of a child with chickenpox all summer. We were all sick. Mothers had to nurse their children through these illnesses without much help from the primitive medicines of that day.

Scarlet fever was one of the most serious of the ailments. I had it, but such a light case that it was not even recognized. Consequently, I exposed several other children at school. One was Ralph Poe. Our mothers were good friends and we often played together. He nearly died.

In the summers, Grandmother, Mother, Aunt Gladys, and Aunt Sadie canned fruit and made jams and jellies. It seemed to me that they worked all summer long in a hot kitchen. But everyone enjoyed the fruit in the wintertime. Grandfather made apple cider in a big wooden vat.

Joe and I sometimes picked cherries in Grandfather's orchard. We climbed the big trees and gathered scattered red, sour cherries. We spent a lot of time there climbing trees, playing in the sand, and exploring.

In spite of New Mexico's relative newness as part of the United States it offered its children good education. I went to school in Old Mesilla for the first three grades, and Mesilla Park for fourth, fifth, and sixth. The grades taught "readin', writin', and 'rithmetic." We had learned some of this at home, as Mother had read stories to us at bedtime, and given us children's books. She read to us almost every night, children's classics - the *Beatrix Potter* series, nursery rhymes, *Just So* stories, and others of that era. After I learned to read, I read *Hans Christian Anderson* tales and other fairy tales.

Our home also valued music. Mother played the piano well. She had studied piano in college, and kept up her playing afterward. She would order sheet music from a mail-order house and often played for church services and for special occasions. She gave me lessons for a couple of years but had to discontinue it because she didn't have time with all her other responsibilities. I have always regretted not being able to go on with the piano.

When I was in seventh grade my father bought a small farm five miles down the Valley south of the Gale house in the Brazito area, just east of present-day NM 478. Mother was unhappy to move so far away. In the days of the Model T and poor roads it was a long way from Grandmother and Mother's friends. She missed her friends terribly and grieved because she couldn't help Grandmother more. Grandmother had become ill and eventually died in 1927. As was the custom in those days, her body was displayed in an open casket in the parlor. The parlor was opened only for very special occasions. I remember Mother taking me near to view Grandmother. It was the first time I saw a dead person.

The new Rigney farm was in an undeveloped part of the Valley where the land had not yet been leveled. My father had a house built, too small at first, as it seemed most of his small salary went to develop the rest of the farm. We had very little money for anything but essentials. My mother sewed well and made the clothes for both of us, and for my little sisters.

The move took my friends and me away from the good school I liked as well. The school Joe and I had to attend was a mile away and we walked to and from alongside the main road to El Paso. It was a three-teacher, two-room country school, which served a small community of farmers and farm workers. My teacher for seventh and eighth grade was a severe-looking, older woman, named Mrs. Pullam. She drilled us in the multiplication tables and grammar. And I learned them and still remember both well. I had the best grades in my graduating class and had to make a little speech. I was 12 years old.

My High School Years, 1928-1932

The Union High School was in Las Cruces, eight miles from our home on the farm. Las Cruces then had a population of about 7,000, one long main street, with Loretto Academy at the south end and Sheriff Lucero's house at the other. My only transportation to and from school was in a carpool with a group of kids we considered 'Okies.' I did that, unhappily, the first two years, and then a bus was started as population in that part of the Valley had grown. But both methods precluded me from staying after school to take part in most of the extra-curricular activities.

In my junior and senior years, I sometimes stayed with Aunt Sadie, Aunt Gladys, and Uncle Jerry who lived together in Las Cruces. Jerry was hired as football and basketball coach at Las Cruces High school after his graduation from A&M in 1926. Staying over enabled me to partake in some of the school activities and have fun. I was in the senior play and was on the girls' basketball team.

Ruth was born during my sophomore year. She was unplanned. Mother was beginning menopause and not well. Ruth was a healthy baby, but Mother's health deteriorated. That summer, she spent a lot of time in bed and it became my job to help with baby Ruth, and especially to wash diapers. We did that the hard way - no washing machine or drier. I vowed then that I would not marry and have children.

In order to get well, Mother had to have an operation to repair her damaged reproductive system. She had not had proper post-partum care after any of the babies. Father was opposed and wouldn't pay for it. Aunt Sadie insisted and took care of the costs. That undoubtedly saved Mother's life.

My father was a strict fundamentalist Southern Baptist. We attended Sunday school and Church every Sunday. He was superintendent of the Sunday school for several years and Mother played the piano. His intolerance of any beliefs but his own caused much sorrow for Mother and me later on.

I had good girl friends growing up. Bettina Mundy was my first. Her mother and mine were best friends as well. I am sure we played together as babies and from then on through childhood. Her younger brother, Bill was about Joe's age, so we made a good foursome. I didn't share high school with Bettina. I was a year ahead of her, and she had to walk home right after school, but we saw one another again later at NMA&M. My closest friend in high school was Jeanette Gustafson. The Gustafson's lived on a farm near the College (off present-day El Paseo). Jeanette and I were the same age and in the same Sunday school class, as well as high



*Elsie at Las Cruces High School,
photo courtesy of Walter Himes*

school. She played the piano beautifully. Her younger brother, Henry, was Joe's age and a good friend.

In high school I was competitive for grades with a boy who lived in Las Cruces. Teachers and others spoke about how smart he was. I guess I was beginning a feminist attitude then because I was determined to get better grades than he did - and I did. I was valedictorian of my graduating class, and he was salutatorian.

My father was not a good businessman and we didn't have much money. However, he did have a strong commitment to education and cultural values.

The College was important in our lives. It provided the cultural life of the community. We attended concerts and recitals there. I attended many Commencement exercises with Mother and thought the processions quite grand - Father in cap and gown with the other faculty members.

There was never any doubt in our family that we children would go to college. A person finished college first before doing anything else. Both my parents valued education. They had both graduated from NM A&M in 1911, the year before New Mexico became a state. And it hadn't been easy. My father had worked in the horticulture department to pay his expenses, and mother had ridden a little mare three miles from their home in order to attend classes. Her dedication to education and strong independence afterward set an important example for me.

New Mexico A&M, 1932-1936

I enrolled at New Mexico A&M in the autumn of 1932, in the School of General Science with a major in English. It seems impossible, but I remember tuition for a semester being \$50. 4-H Club work I had completed in the summers gave me a scholarship of \$25 a semester. Soon after enrollment, I got a job as student stenographer for J.C. Overpeck, Professor of Agronomy. I had taken typing and shorthand in high school and had pretty good speed records in both. This job paid 25 cents an hour. My classes were mostly mornings, so I had nearly every afternoon to work. I was elected Secretary-Treasurer of the Freshman class.



*Elsie at NM A&M, 1932,
photo courtesy of Walter Hines*

Trouble with Father began immediately. I lived at home, and relied on him for transportation to and from the College where he worked. He knew my schedule and would come to walk with me between classes. His office was on the same floor as J.C. Overpeck's, and he would walk by my door frequently to check on me. He was opposed to dancing, sororities, and reluctant to allow me to go on dates. Tension had built up at

home, also.

In spite of Father, I did have a romance in the spring of my freshman year with Tom Reid, son of a prominent and affluent lawyer and rancher in Albuquerque. Tom was an upperclassman, senior, I think, and had a nice car. I guess he was really in love with me because he gave up the Saturday night dances and fraternity parties (which I was not allowed to attend) to have dates with me. Tom wanted to marry. As the school year came to a close we discussed eloping. I was so discouraged with my situation at home and with Father that I was tempted, although I still felt strongly that I must finish school. Tom had a financial constraint. He was on a generous allowance from his parents. They would have to give consent or would cut off his funds. When he went home that summer and broached the subject he found his Mother strongly opposed. She hadn't met me, but said I would be entirely unsuitable. I was just a little country girl with no social training. Tom needed a different kind of wife. He wrote me as kindly as he could, but it hurt.

Tension at home increased further during my sophomore year. I had to ask Father's permission for any social event and as his disposition worsened it became harder and harder to do so. His friends were all on my side and tried to reason with him. When Burton Fite, an old friend who shared the office with Father, tried to explain to him that I needed a normal social life, Father got very angry and refused to have anything to do with the Fites thereafter.

One of my good friends was the secretary to the President, Flora Hamiel. Her husband Glenn, known affectionately as Ham, was head of the Chemistry Department. Flora became a mentor. She hired me as a student stenographer in the President's office. That was a choice job on campus because it paid 35 cents an hours, not the usual 25.

As my junior year began the situation at home had grown even worse. With Mother's consent, it became clear that I would have to leave home to have any semblance of a normal college life, or any social life afterward. Uncle Jerry had told me that I could live with him and Nona on campus where they were proctors at Kent Hall. To avoid Jerry being blamed by my father for my leaving home, I saved enough to join and live in the Zeta Tau Alpha sorority house the first three months; then I planned to move in with the Hines at Kent Hall.

One Saturday I decided to make the break. I had a date for a dance that night. In the early afternoon I packed an organdy evening dress Mother had made for a high school graduation party and another change of clothes. I walked north on the bank of the irrigation ditch about three miles to the home of the Mundy's. Betty Mundy, too, had been outspoken in her disapproval of Father's behavior and had offered to help me at any time.

From the Mundy's I telephoned my date, and later he came and picked me up and took me to the dance. I was afraid all evening that Father would appear at the entrance to the gym with a gun in his hand.

He didn't, but he did react strongly. He went to see a judge in Las Cruces to try to force me back, but I was eighteen and couldn't be forced. He wanted to lodge charges against Jerry for having influenced me to leave, but he had no case. The final outcome was that Father was fired at the end of that school year for his behavior.

I went to live with Jerry and Nona that winter (photos). Jerry was now football and basketball coach at the College. Their apartment at Kent Hall was in one end of the dorm. I moved in and became the only girl at New Mexico A&M to live in a boys' dorm! I paid \$10 a month toward the cost of food and did housework for Nona. I washed the dishes after dinner each night and cleaned the apartment on Saturdays. I admired them both and enjoyed them. They were witty and lots of fun. I lived with them until I graduated in 1936.

Nona's style and sophistication made me feel inferior, but she was nice to me. The Hines' lives were at the opposite end of the spectrum. In some ways I found this disturbing, too. Their recreation was "partying" with a group of young marrieds in Las Cruces. The entertainment was drinking and telling dirty stories. The same pattern was followed with visiting coaches. Later on this proved destructive. As the couples drank more and more they got entangled with one another's spouses. Eventually, several couples divorced. The coaches were a disillusionment too. Jerry protected me from them most of the time, but once in a while one would sneak around and proposition me.



*Nona Hines,
photo courtesy of Walter Hines*

This, of course, made life more difficult for my mother because my father blamed the Hines for my "running away." He was intransigent, said I was disowned, and told Mother not to have anything to do with me. That was a great sadness for both of us. She did come to see me now and then at the College, and in the succeeding years we remained very close.

Despite the family problems, I started having a fine time at College. I enjoyed the sorority, went to all the dances, and took part in other activities on campus. I was sorority president during my senior year and had the lead in the senior play.

Academically, I thrived. The head of the English department was



*Coach Jerry Hines,
photo courtesy of Walter Hines*

a brilliant, witty man, Rufus Breland, who was in New Mexico rather than a more prestigious eastern university because of the freedom it offered. He didn't have to publish or study for a higher degree. He liked to go to Harvard in summers to take courses from a then famous Shakespearian scholar. He liked his English majors those years and gave us some courses not usually offered — for example, a semester of Anglo-Saxon, and one of Chaucer.



*The Hines Home,
photo courtesy of Walter Hines*

Another unusual person was Dr. Baldwin, Dean of the School of General Science. He was an austere appearing Englishman. In addition to his responsibilities as Dean, he taught courses, one of which was History of England. I had a personal encounter with him that is fun to remember. I missed the semester exam for History of England and had to make it up orally, sitting beside his desk and answering questions. The questions were thorough and hardly missed a section of the book. He wanted to see whether I was as smart as Breland said I was. He was skeptical of Breland's judgment because I was also pretty. Word came back to me that he decided Breland was right.

Probably the most exciting thing that happened to me was in my senior year. Uncle Jerry's football team won the 1935 Border Conference and was invited to play post-season in the first Sun Bowl in El Paso. There was to be a big celebration and parade. I was elected Sun Bowl princess to represent the College. There were also other princesses from local towns. We rode on the Queen's float in the parade on New Year's Day, and were interviewed by a Hollywood talent scout. He told me I was his first choice and made an offer. I said no, that I was in the middle of my senior year and had to finish before I did anything else.

While the decision to leave home seemed necessary-and I haven't changed my mind about it since-it had a high cost. I was deprived of companionship with my mother, with whom I had a close, loving relationship, and did not really know my brother and sisters until we were adults. Joe was four years behind me in school. His birthday was mid December so he was not allowed to begin school until he was six and a half. Those four years in the "growing up" ages were a gulf. Besides which, we didn't have time to be together when we were home because Father always made him work



*Lois and Ruth Rigney with Mother,
photo courtesy of Walter Hines*

hard around the farm, and I helped Mother in the house. When I left at eighteen, Lois was ten and Ruth, four (see photo with Mother taken a few years later). They were all forbidden to have anything to do with me, and, of course, I was not allowed home. It wasn't until much later that I reconnected with my siblings.

I graduated in late May of 1936. The class was relatively small, I think about 125. I was valedictorian of my graduating class again. That was a depression year in New Mexico. The Big Depression had hit New Mexico a little later than the East and Middle West. All of its graduates were worried about getting a job. It was the first year that all of the Ag and Engineering students hadn't been recruited before graduation. I was especially worried because I had no choice but to make it on my own. Because of my college record and the influence of professors and good friends, I was offered a position teaching English at Las Cruces Union High School. It was with relief that I accepted this position.

Epilogue

After leaving college and teaching at Las Cruces High, Elsie embarked on a long and interesting professional career and then, a full family life. With an infant son, she worked for the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) in Washington, D.C. during the World War II years. When UNRRA disbanded after the War, she worked for the Food Assistance Organization and then the State Department. In 1954, she accepted a position with The Ford Foundation in Indonesia where she worked for two years on education and vocational projects. In Djakarta, son Mike was home schooled with the University of Wisconsin program for secondary education. While in Indonesia, she met and later (1957) married Dr. Jesse Carr of San Francisco. Dr. Carr was in the Pathology Department at the University of California and Chief Pathologist at San Francisco General Hospital from 1932 to 1967.

A long series of "adventures" ensued with the ever-energetic Dr. Carr-competitive yachting, world travel, a vacation home in the Fiji's, a ranch in the Central Valley of California, and many return trips to New Mexico State University for Homecoming and with the NMSU Foundation. Elsie received the prestigious NMSU Branding Iron award in 2004 for her generosity and service to her alma mazer. She is presently retired in San Rafael, California.

In her recently completed memoir, Elsie's *Story*, she made the following statement:

As I look back over my life, which has spanned nearly a century I see unusual experiences for a woman during that time. And what a time it has been with World War II, the feminist revolution,

the “Hippie” era, the Civil Rights movement, and the profound changes in communication and travel started by the technical developments emanating from Silicon Valley.

I see a strong independence as part of my nature, and self-confidence in spite of being fully aware of the societal limitations on what a woman could do. My mother had set an example of the independence by, first of all, getting a college education and then refusing to marry for two years while she proved she could make a living teaching school. My leaving home in the middle of my college career put me on a different course from that of my classmates. Because of irreconcilable differences with my father about how I should live in college I felt it necessary to leave if I were going to have a full life, but it did make my life more difficult. Good friends supported me and were mentors when needed.

*Walter Hines is a first cousin of Elsie Carr and son of Coach Jerry and Nona Hines. He is an engineering graduate of NMSU, author of the book, *Aggies of the Pacific War*; and presently resides in Albuquerque.*

Endnotes

- 1 Mother Elsie Raye Hines Rigney (d. 1969) was born in Indiana and moved with the Hines family to Springer in 1891 and then to Old Mesilla in 1901. She was the oldest of five children of Lemuel and Minnie Mullin Hankins Hines, the other four of whom were Fred (d. 1977), Gladys (d. 1953), Harold (d.1964), and Gerald (Jerry) (d. 1963).
- 2 Father Joseph W. Rigney (d. 1978) came to New Mexico in 1909 as a student at New Mexico A&M with other family members from Alabama. Rigney had been enrolled at Auburn for two years and finished his college schooling in horticulture at A&M in 1911. He and wife Elsie Raye had four children - Elsie (San Rafael, Calif), Joe (d. 1979), Lois (d.2008), and Ruth (Albuquerque). All graduated from New Mexico A&M.
- 3 Minnie Hankins Hines (d. 1927) married Lemuel in 1890 in Indiana. She migrated with him, first to Springer, N Mex. in 1891 and then to Old Mesilla in 1901.
- 4 Lemuel Hines (d.1935) was a medical doctor who first practiced in Springer in 1891, but opted to develop a mail order orchard business after buying property in Old Mesilla in 1901.
- 5 Jerry Hines married Nona Viola Mossman (d. 1951) of Mesquite in 1930. He graduated from Las Cruces High in 1922 and New Mexico A & M in 1926. Hines was a star athlete and coached at Las Cruces High from 1926 to 1929 and at A&M from 1929 to 1940; and 1946 to 1947.
- 6 Sadie Hankins (d. 1953), sister of Minnie Hankins Hines, lived with the Hines family in Old Mesilla, and later with sister-in-law Gladys Hines in Las Cruces. She was a long-time school teacher in Las Cruces.

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Book Reviews

***Cricket in the Web: The 1949 Unsolved Murder that Unraveled Politics in New Mexico* by Paula Moore. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2008. ISBN 978-0-8263-4341-3. 215 pages, 12 halftones, 2 maps, appendices, bibliography, index, \$24.95, hardcover.**

A teenage girl from a small town is found dead under mysterious circumstances. The investigation into her death exposes a world of corruption involving prominent business owners, law enforcement personnel, and politicians.

Such a description sounds like it could come from the back cover of a detective novel or even the early 1990s TV series “Twin Peaks,” but in this case it applies to the case of Ovida “Cricket” Coogler, who disappeared from downtown Las Cruces at around 3:00 a.m. on 31 March 1949 and whose body was found seventeen days later abandoned in the desert. The mystery surrounding her death, and the effects that it produced in the politics of Las Cruces and New Mexico are the focus of *Cricket in the Web* by local author Paula Moore.

The book begins with a depiction of southern New Mexico in the late 1940s, when vice and corruption were rampant. Moore then surveys the known facts about Coogler’s life and whereabouts in the last hours before her disappearance, and from there the book traces in turn the events that followed from the case, specifically from its mismanagement. Since practically all of the useful forensic evidence that could have helped to solve the question of Coogler’s death conclusively was either destroyed or lost through incompetent or apathetic investigation and record-keeping, the investigations that followed concerned themselves as much or more with this mismanagement of the case and the conduct of the personnel responsible (or who should have been responsible), than with trying to solve Coogler’s death. Although few of the indictments made resulted in convictions, the scandal they caused was enough to bring about a sweeping change in New Mexico’s political scene, especially visible in the election of Ed Mechem as governor in 1950, the first Republican elected to that office in seventeen years. The only murder trial that resulted from the case two years after the body was found resulted in an acquittal of the defendant due to lack of evidence.

Moore tells the story of the mysterious death and its aftermath with a perspective well-attuned to a reader’s likely wish to visualize the events described, frequently adding details of clothing and personal appearance or providing contextual references such as the prices of consumer goods in 1949. Newspaper articles are one of her most extensive sources so it is not surprising that such pleasing detail should

have been available to her to pass along, although it does show an inherent irony in the case itself: the details that surface rarely constitute any conclusive evidence. In some ways her relation of the story reads like a newspaper feature, inviting the reader's interest and emotional involvement with familiar and accessible language.

Moore's background in creative writing is apparent in this book that should be enjoyable to a wide audience. Although this book is not presented as an academic history, Moore's range of sources used is commendable, and she avoids distorting her interpretation of them with sensationalism or obvious bias. She takes care to present the facts as they stand, distinguishing between fact, conjecture, reasonable conclusion, and rumor. If she noticeably repeats herself on occasion that can be excused as it helps to keep the facts straight and fresh in the reader's mind.

Cricket in the Web points to and shows to some degree the far-reaching effects of the Coogler case, specifically the disruption of the New Mexico political environment and the dislodging of its entrenched power networks, after the Doña Ana County Grand Jury, began boldly raiding gambling establishments and issuing indictments to officials at the local and state level. The book devotes chapters to the removal trial of County Sheriff Happy Apodaca; the inconclusive murder trial of Pittsburgh Steeler Jerry Nuzum two years after Coogler's death; the trial of state Corporation Commissioner Dan Sedillo for morals charges; and the "torture trial" of Happy Apodaca, State Chief of Police Hubert Beasley, and Third Judicial District field agent Roy Sandman resulting from the interrogation of Wesley Byrd. This last trial, which resulted in the incarceration of all three defendants, was the first civil rights case against a law enforcement officer in United States history. More could be written about the interaction between popular racial attitudes and prejudices in Las Cruces in 1950 and the proceedings of this case. Readers may also wish for more detail of the corruption that existed in the state government and how the grand jury's actions drove underworld figures from New Mexico to Nevada and other places, but what gaps there are in Moore's presentation of the case should not be surprising, since the documentation that has survived has had to get past not only the forgetting of almost sixty years but also the concerted efforts to suppress evidence by those who stood to lose by its exposure. Some details have survived to give brief clear glimpses, but the rest has been forgotten, hidden or otherwise insufficiently documented to present more than conjecture and hearsay to fill in the gap.

For the scarcity of documentation available Moore has done an admirable job of presenting it in order to revive attention to and awareness of a case whose historical importance outweighs the concrete records it left behind. The book ends with the hope that one day more truth will be "rendered" from renewed and sustained attention to Cricket Coogler's mysterious death.

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Texas Devils: Rangers and Regulars on the Lower Rio Grande, 1846-1861 by Michael L. Collins. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2008. ISBN 0806139390. 316 pages. 10 halftones, 3 maps, endnotes, bibliography, index, \$26.95

Before the Civil War, before statehood, the state of Texas was the home of a band of men ready to fight for their homes, their state, and their beliefs, no matter how radical. Their numbers rose and fell, and the faces changed on a fairly regular basis, but at the core were a few men who were associated with the Texas Rangers for most of the early period.

In *Texas Devils: Rangers and Regulars on the Lower Rio Grande, 1846-1861*, Michael L. Collins gives readers a view of the Rangers not usually seen, either in literature, historical accounts, or movies. For the most part they were rough men, many of them from the East and Midwest, who came to Texas to make new lives for themselves. Good with a gun, able to survive the harshest of conditions, yes, but also willing to kill, sometimes with little provocation, and fearing no man or law, they behaved in ways usually associated with the men they hunted.

They were led by men such as John Coffee “Jack” Hays, Ben McCulloch, and John S. “Rip” Ford in fights against Indians and Mexicans and became feared in southwest Texas as devils. In telling the story of the Rangers, Collins also gives the reader a history of the border country along the Rio Grande, where the cliché, “life was cheap,” could easily have been coined. Disputes over cattle, the border itself, and any other cause or excuse could bring about battles or skirmishes, or individual shootings.

Among the cast of characters are Juan Cortina, known as the Red Robber, a thief, rustler, and kidnapper who was chased, but never brought to justice. Col. Robert E. Lee was posted to the area to bring Cortina to justice and bring a modicum of peace; however, there were never enough men. Other military and political men, such as Samuel Peter Heintzelman and Sam Houston, used the talents of the Rangers, but never trusted them or approved of their methods. Only their effectiveness as fighting men brought them back into service, until they went too far, which they nearly always did.

Even as the Rangers fought for Texas, some within their ranks believed that Mexico, or northern Mexico at the very least, should belong to Texas and the United States. Others wanted to create a separate state as a buffer zone along the border. Still others formed military units and invaded South American countries, hoping to bring them into the U.S. or at least “civilize” them. Both politically and militarily, Mexicans and South Americans on one side, and Texans and Americans on the other came to hate and mistrust one another.

As the border gradually became more settled, and attention in the

United States turned inward to its own Civil War, many of the Rangers looked elsewhere for their future. Many moved farther west, to California in particular, and north and northwest, becoming lawmen, business men, ranchers, and politicians. Even some of those who stayed in Texas were successful in the same fields. After such a bloody history, however, a like number died violently within a few years, just as they had lived.

Collins has written a history of a group of men who lived up to their reputations, but he has added the more human side to their stories. Sometimes cruel and violent, sometimes conciliatory and law-abiding, their stories are never dull. The men were in many ways the products of their environments. Collins shows how their actions could make matters better, and just as often make the situations so much worse. He gives the story of a world out of control, seeking to become civilized in spite of itself.

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Feeding Chilapa: The Birth, Life, and Death of a Mexican Region by Chris Kyle. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2008. ISBN 978- 0-8061-3921-0. 288 pages, 17 figures, 5 tables, 10 maps, appendices, bibliography, index, \$24.95, paper.

In *Feeding Chilapa*, Chris Kyle examines the industrial evolution of a town and surrounding region situated in the state of Guerrero in southern Mexico. Drawing on earlier anthropological studies that employed the “region” as the level of analysis, Kyle contends that anthropological community studies since the 1950s have failed to explain how communities are shaped by external processes and this developed varying patterns of development even within the same region. This regional history of a neglected, understudied basin in Mexico documents the integration of a pre-industrial regional economy, detailing the market relations between the city and neighboring hinterland during the 18th and 19th centuries, turning to analyze the region’s economic demise under the expansion of national infrastructure and market integration in the 20th century. In retelling the narrative history of an underrepresented Mexican region, Kyle faces the challenge of reconstructing history with limited documentary material yet conveys the general transformation of regional livelihoods throughout three different historic periods. This study of Chilapa follows the tradition established by regional historians of Mexico, such as Thomas Benjamin, whose work now offers readers a deeper understanding of variations in regional histories throughout different Mexican states.

In the late 18th century, as commercial cotton cultivation expanded in Guerrero’s coastal regions, Chilapa developed an important cotton textile industry and marketing network. Kyle details the ethnic transformation of the region, expansion of market and trade networks, and critical role of *arrieros*, or muleteers, in transporting cotton from coastal Guerrero to Puebla, the traditional center of textile manufacturing. In turn, Chilapa’s urban growth necessitated the transformation of the neighboring rural communities of the Atempa basin, as commercial agriculture expanded to provide food crops for a growing urban and artisanal working base. Kyle details the growing tensions during the early 19th century between urban center and rural hinterland as political and economic pressures shaped land tenure, land use, and labor relations throughout the neighboring region. By mapping out land use patterns and variation throughout the basin, Kyle documents the spatial organization of these conflicts between urban needs and rural responses by large landowners that inevitably culminated in the 1842 rebellion.

In the aftermath of what Kyle defines as a rebellion over food not land, small producers and investors assumed control over much of the basin’s region, transforming the agricultural system into a food provisioning base for Chilapa during the late 19th century. Through migration out of the urban center into the hinterland, small-scale landowners and

growers took over abandoned agricultural land, assuming de facto control over rural lands and constructing a regional economy that reflected internal needs. Although reinforcing this region's reputation as a marginal and isolated basin, this historic shift provided the autonomous economic base that underlay Chilapa's rebozo production until the early 20th century. Again, by spatially depicting the dynamic between urban center and neighboring agricultural zones, Kyle contrasts the growing rural populations and commercial agricultural shifts with Chilapa's continued dependence on the countryside as its food source. By the 1940s, increased competition, exacerbated by the persistent challenge of food provision, resulted in the dramatic decline of the rebozo industry, an economic crisis from which the Atempa basin and Chilapa have never recovered.

In response, the Mexican government intervened directly in the regional economy, presenting alternative forms of development and new infrastructure theoretically designed to stimulate the regional economy yet, at the same time, further integrating the region into the national economy and undermining its capacity to recover. Kyle contends that this third period, characterized by the arrival of mass-produced goods, imported grains, and new roads, marked the final demise of Atempa's "regional" economy. Now overrun by small-scale commercial *tianguis* and *tortillerias*, Chilapa subsists on external commercial goods, providing little opportunity for regional producers or connection with the regional economy. In response, as Kyle details, rural areas and communities have responded with high rates of economic decline and out-migration.

In this study Chris Kyle presents a historical narrative that describes the rise and fall of one of Mexico's more isolated regions, raising many questions about the contrasting impacts of marginality on the one hand, and national integration, on the other. This framework reflects similar arguments proposed by Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán's concept of regions of refuge, in which he contended that isolated regions often provided enclaves that facilitated the persistence of ethnic diversity and maintenance of cultural traditions. In turn, Kyle's study presents the political economy counterpart, suggesting that regional autonomy and isolation provided an economic stability opportunities, and development now no longer afforded under neoliberal economies. Yet, at the same time, Kyle notes that Chilapans do not reveal a romantic nostalgia for the past, contesting national integration; instead, they struggle to adapt to the economic challenges they face, often adopting strategies that further expand industrial capitalism.

Written in a readable, narrative style, Kyle's study would be most appropriate for undergraduate history classes, capturing the complexities of regional variations within critical historic periods. The story of Chilapa presents a challenge to readers, a thought-provoking analysis that questions both the nature of isolation and marginality and the benefits of integration into a national economy. Given the recent impacts of globalization and international financial crisis on Mexico and subsequent declines of international remittances from rural migrants, Mexico's policy makers might be well-served to reflect on historical lessons learned from this and other regional studies.

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