

# SOUTHERN NEW MEXICO HISTORICAL REVIEW



*J. CISNEROS '89*

*Pasajero del Camino Real*

**Doña Ana County Historical Society**  
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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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## Editors' Page

Hello again. I suppose it is fitting for the *Southern New Mexico Historical Review* to take a step back in time. For a decade before becoming New Mexico state historian, I had the pleasure of editing the review. I passed along editing duties to my colleague at New Mexico State University, Martha Shipman Andrews. This fall I received a call from Jim Eckles, informing me that Martha had resigned. After a pause, I asked whether a replacement was needed. When Jim responded in the affirmative, I suggested that the assistant state historian, Rob Martinez, and I would put together the 2014 issue and then hand off the editing chores to someone else.

By happenstance, most of the selections in this issue relate in some way to Mesilla. Joyce Marie Brumley contributed reminiscence about her experiences in the cotton fields around Mesilla during the 1940s. C. W. "Buddy" Ritter and Craig Holden adapted an article from their forthcoming book on Mesilla, tentatively entitled "Mesilla: The Life of the Town and Its Valley." I have edited the columns that Thomas Casad wrote when he was the self-styled "agricultural editor" of the *Mesilla Valley Independent*. Cal Traylor contributed a piece on what appear to be photographs of the young Pat Garrett. Finally, Rob sleuthed out the baptismal record of Fabián García, who worked in the Casad Orchards as a young man.

With no Mesilla connection but of no less interest are the FAT Boys article on the misadventures of an unfortunate German in seventeenth-century New Mexico, Bernardo Gruber. The first person to respond to my call for articles for this issue was the go-to-guy on the history of the Civil War in New Mexico (among many other subjects), John P. Wilson. Jack has provided us with two short pieces dealing with Jefferson Davis, railroads, and mail service in New Mexico during the War Between the States.

Francis Cochran, a budding anthropologist at NMSU and student in Jon Hunner's class on historic preservation, contributes an article on the history of Mesilla Park. Her research is part of an ambitious project to place historically significant structures in Mesilla Park on the New Mexico Register of Cultural Properties and the National Register of Historic Places. We wish them well in their endeavors.

Rob and I would not have been able to get this issue to press without the assistance of Jim Eckles, Doyle Piland, and all of the individuals who wrote articles and book reviews, often on very short notice. It has been fun, but I must say good-bye again.

Rick Hendricks, Coeditor

Rob Martinez, Coeditor

# Cotton Field

## Old Mesilla, New Mexico

By Joyce Marie Brumley

### Chapter One – “My U.S. Citizenship”

The Greyhound Bus left El Paso, Texas, and I settled in a rear seat for my three hundred sixty mile trip to Big Spring, Texas. When a quick stop startled the passengers dozing in the rear seats of the bus, my eyes suddenly opened, and I looked outside the bus window near my seat.

The border patrolman stepped up and entered the Greyhound Bus. Walking down the aisle of the bus asking questions, the patrolman asked me; “Where were you born?”

“Old Mesilla,” I answered.

“Old Mesilla where?” The Border Patrolman asked.

“Old Mesilla, New Mexico,” I answered in a sleepy voice.

“Mexico?” the question came back at me.

“No Sir, Old Mesilla was part of the Gadsden Purchase, so it has been a part of New Mexico and the United States since about the middle 1800s.”

“Just go back to sleep I don’t need a lesson in history.” The border patrolman moved down the bus aisle past my seat.

The bus rolled on. My destination was Big Spring, Texas where I would visit my older brother, Walter Henry Brumley, who was born in Las Cruces, New Mexico, before my parents moved to Old Mesilla to plant a cotton farm, and run a dairy farm for a man named Mr. Stiff.

I tried to go back to sleep but my memories went back to my first home, the place I was born and lived until about the time I turned four years old. The screened in front porch facing south was clear to my young memory. The kitchen was there too on the east side of the house where my older sister Maxine and older brother Walter Henry played. Sometimes momma would put me outside to play with them. Momma would turn an empty syrup bucket upside down in the yard for me to sit on. I recall being put outside the kitchen door to sit on that syrup bucket to watch my older brother and sister play.

Of course, momma kept a close eye on me.

Our younger brother James Lee was born in the Old Mesilla house also, and was still a baby as my memories begin to immerge. Both mine and James Lee Brumleys’ birth certificates show Dr. Miller delivered us. Dr. Miller was a country doctor, and made the rounds to visit his patients frequently. We were often on his rounds, because small children need a good doctor’s eye on them.

### Chapter Two – “The House by the Ditch Bank”

The house was wood frame or maybe sheet rock. Two doors linger in my memory. There were several steps to climb to reach the screened in front porch. (I remember crawling up the steps as I was too short to stretch my legs up the steps.) The door was on the right side of the house and also had several steps. There was a built up foundation, with open places where one could easily crawl under the house. A grown man could even crawl under the house. Normally a frame house was not built right on the ground, because of rodents, snakes, lizards, and insects that could enter the living quarters.

The under part of our house I remember was accessible from the back of our kitchen. One day momma had a rake and a hoe in order to dig out a bed of snakes. She was not just angry, she was down-right driven, chopping every one of those snakes in half.

I remember momma telling daddy, “Oh these snakes are not poisonous.”

“Just how do you know they aren’t poisonous?” Daddy replied.

“Because these snakes have round heads like garden snakes.” Momma informed him, “Rattlesnakes have pointed heads.” I just kill the garden Snakes because I don’t want them crawling where our kids play.”

Momma watched her children very closely, because of snakes. She also made sure we didn’t wonder over to a large canal to the west of our house. The canal overflowed with water during planting season.

New Mexico is a farmer’s dream. The farmer doesn’t

have to wait for rain and hope the crop will grow. The Pueblo Indians in New Mexico taught settlers how to irrigate their crops. It was the Tigua Indians that eventually settled near El Paso, and taught farming skills in that area.

The Rio Grande River runs through Northern New Mexico into Southern New Mexico where water was released into the canals for farmers to use for irrigation. The water was dammed up north of the Mesilla Valley. Elephant Butte Dam held the water until it was needed for irrigation or there was too much rain to hold all the water at Elephant Butte, which seldom happened. The water was released into large canals when needed for the farmers to use. If there was an abundance of rain, and Elephant Butte needed relief, water was allowed to flow down the Rio Grande River into the Gulf of Mexico.

Large canals can be hazardous if young children are allowed to play on the ditch banks or the bridges built to cross the canals. I remember two youngsters were playing on the bridge of the canal, or I heard the story so many times over the years I thought I remembered the kids playing on the bridge.

That particular bridge was the one we drove across to get to and from our house to a country road leading into Old Mesilla. One day the two youngsters happened to be sitting on the edge of the bridge throwing rocks into the canal when they slipped and fell into the canal. The water was flowing fast that day and washed those youngsters several miles from the bridge where they ended up in a smaller irrigation ditch. A farmer opened the gate leading into the smaller ditch to get water for irrigation of a cotton crop and found the boy's bodies. That drowning event was stamped onto the minds of Mesilla Valley Farmers for many years.

The kitchen in our house was a delightful memory. There was a long table with side benches for me and my siblings to sit on. I despised food, but I was required to come to the table anyway. A biscuit with some red jelly and peanut butter was enough for me, but sometimes I got a plate of food anyway. I remember stretching my right arm by the side of my plate, moving it along the top side of the table and knocking at least two or three plates of food on the floor. I also remember the whipping my daddy gave me. After that I was not required to face a full plate of food. My momma took control of giving me small portions. Also, momma never made

me eat anything I didn't want. So, I lived mostly on peanut butter and Red Rex jelly with a piece of bacon or fried chicken occasionally.

When I was older Momma once told me she asked our country doctor about my eating habits. She remarked to the Doctor, "Joyce Marie doesn't eat more than a cup of food a month."

Dr. Miller told momma, "Some people do not require a lot of food to survive. Joyce is probably one of those people who just eats to live not living to eat."

That kitchen held other memories like the day Walter Henry sat on the edge of the number three washtub where we took our baths. He was all dressed to go to town when he fell in the water; got soaked, even getting his coat wet. Momma changed him from top to bottom, but that coat was the only one he had. Walter's coat waved in the wind outside the car window as momma drove to Las Cruces that afternoon. She put the collar of the coat inside the car window, rolled the window up, and let the coat hang in the breeze. The coat did get dry on the way to town. I found it entertaining watching the coat just blowing in the wind all the way into Las Cruces where we shopped for stuff we couldn't get in Old Mesilla.

### Chapter 3 - "Kitchens: Gathering Place for Families"

It was in the kitchen where I first met Uncle Archie, Momma's youngest brother standing there dressed in a dark blue Navy uniform. It was probably the end of 1944 just before I turned three on January 1, 1945. Uncle Archie went to Pearl Harbor in December of 1941. Momma often told us of how the Navy Ship Uncle Archie was on arrived in Pearl Harbor from California right on the tail end of the Japanese bombings.

Uncle Archie went through a small bag that held some of his personal items. He pulled out a little sewing kit. The kit held thread, needles, and a pair of small scissors.

Uncle Archie held the sewing kit up for momma to see, and said, "I can give this to Maxine. I will get a new one before I return to duty."

I held my right hand up with my pointer finger toward my chest, trying to say, "I am the one that sews, give it to me." But, the words did not come out. So, Uncle Archie handed the kit to Maxine.

I loved to sew very early in life. Momma would give

me a few scraps of material from something she was sewing, and thread a needle for me. Most of the time she would cut doll clothes from the scraps, and show me how to guide the needle through the material. By age five or six I was making lots of doll clothes. During my teen and adult years I became quite a creative seamstress, designing many of my own clothes.

Maxine didn't like to sew. Maxine liked to be the boss of her three younger siblings, and we all learned to obey her early in life. Of course, Maxine's leadership was primarily for our own safety.

Maxine had an old dog named Bill. She would stand outside when Bill was venturing off down the dirt road, with her right hand stretched toward the road.

As Maxine folded her stretched hand back toward her chest, she would keep folding her hand and calling, "Come 'on Bill!"

Maxine was always more interested in her animals than jobs around the house.

#### Chapter 4 - "Getting to know our Neighbor"

One day in our house near the ditch bank I remember Walter and Maxine playing outside the kitchen door under the shade trees. The East side of our house faced a community of other dwellings, maybe three or four houses anyway.

Right after my nap that day momma opened the door, and put me outside with my two older siblings. That disturbed Maxine, and she found my old syrup bucket, turned the open end toward the ground, and told me, "Sit down on the bucket, and stay out of my playhouse."

I sat down on the bucket, put my right foot down in the grass, and screamed very loudly. Momma come running to the door, and saw the blood gushing from my right foot. She grabbed a towel to wrap my foot, and hollered at daddy to watch the kids. Daddy came home for lunch and hadn't left to go back to work yet. Momma carried me and ran over to Mrs. Campbell's house. Mrs. Campbell invited us in, and took me to her kitchen, sat me on the counter by the kitchen sink, and looked at my foot.

Mrs. Campbell and Momma's discussion was whether I needed stitches from a doctor. My thoughts were, "We have needles and thread at home; why do we

need the doctor to sew."

Mrs. Campbell worked cleaning my foot, and wrapping it. She told Momma to keep a clean sock over the bandage, and change the bandage every day. Mrs. Campbell and Momma decided I probably wouldn't need stitches.

While Mrs. Campbell worked on my foot she gave me a chocolate Hershey bar to eat. That was the first time I ever remember tasting chocolate candy. Hersey bars were not for sale in the stores. Our country was involved in World War II. Chocolate Hershey bars were kept for our soldiers who were fighting in Germany and Japan. At one point I almost asked Mrs. Campbell for candy to give my sister, Maxine, and my brother Walter, but was too bashful to speak up. I remember Mrs. Campbell had a large Wringer Washing Machine filled to the brim with various hard to get items.

Momma spoke often of our neighbor, Mrs. Campbell. Mrs. Campbell seemed to help us a lot, though I just connected our neighbor with my injured right foot at that particular time. I still have a scar across the bottom of my foot; without Mrs. Campbell's help I may have had a serious infection.

Years later at age fourteen, I remember seeing Mrs. Campbell again in the First Baptist Church at Las Cruces, New Mexico. I was attending a House Party given for the GA's (Girl's Auxiliary). At that time our family was living in Anthony, New Mexico, and I had completed the requirements for taking my Queen Step in GA's. The honor would be awarded at the Las Cruces GA function.

The Friday night of the House Party I would receive a crown for completing my step. Mrs. Campbell was crowning the girls who completed the requirements.

Walking down the aisle of First Baptist Church in my Pink Formal, I knelt on a satin pillow to receive my crown.

Before Mrs. Campbell placed the crown on my head she made a short speech about the requirements I finished to achieve my Queen Step. When Mrs. Campbell placed the crown on my head she said, "I am mighty happy to place this crown on Joyce's head for all the hard work she accomplished to get it. I'd like to mention I have known Joyce Marie Brumley since she was a baby. Her family was my neighbors when she was born. We lived as close neighbors for several years in

Old Mesilla, New Mexico”

## Chapter 5 - “The Effects of World War II”

The United States of America was involved in a massive World War when I was born. My momma’s brothers, Uncle Haskell, Uncle Dump (nickname), and Uncle Archie all served in different branches of the military. Uncle Archie served at Pearl Harbor shortly after it was bombed by the Japanese. Uncle Dump served in Germany during the War. Uncle Haskell got to stay state side, because the rule was one son of every family got to stay state side. Haskell spent his military service in Washington State. Haskell liked Washington State except for all the rain. He was raised in Texas where rain was scarce.

The only effects of World War II that momma told effected our family were the rationing of food and clothes items. Food was no big deal for me, because as I said earlier a little peanut butter, red jelly, and a biscuit was all I needed to survive. The red jelly may have been a problem, because sugar was rationed and momma didn’t have enough sugar to make our red jelly.

The store in Old Mesilla where we shopped was known as Sample’s Grocery. I believe Sample was the people’s last name. My parents drove down through the main street in Old Mesilla. Sample’s Grocery was on the left hand side at the end of the street where the main highway intersected to the right of the store. Thus Sample’s Grocery was at the fork of the road into Old Mesilla, and the highway that continued on into Mesilla Park, New Mexico, or it may have been Las Cruces, New Mexico. The part clear in my four year old mind was the fork in the road.

We always parked on the road coming through Old Mesilla, which runs south from our ditch bank home.

Inside the store, I remember a long counter. Mr. or Mrs. Sample or sometimes both of them stood behind a counter. There was a candy rack with large candy peanut patties. Soda pop was kept in one of those old soft drink coolers filled with ice and cold sodas. Each Saturday we got an orange or red soda pop, and a peanut patty. In those days no one bought sodas to keep at home. So, our treat was every Saturday. Walter and I drank our soda pop and ate our peanut patty inside the store while our momma shopped.

Maxine always kept her peanut patty until she got

in the backseat of the car with me and Walter. Maxine would then start eating her peanut patty very slowly, aggravating me and Walter as we begged her for just one more bite of candy.

“Why did you eat yours like a little piggy?” Maxine would reply.

One day momma had enough of the torment, and she turned around from the passenger’s side of the front seat, and took the candy Maxine held in her hand, and divided it three ways, and gave me and Walter a share. Jimmy was still a baby, and had a bottle in his mouth.

Daddy had gone to the store with us that day, and he thought momma was being rather cruel to Maxine, “It’s her candy! Did Walter and Joyce share with her?”

Daddy was not too happy that momma made Maxine share because he always thought she was “most charming” however she acted.

Shopping was difficult, everything was rationed, so no chocolate candy was available in grocery stores. No sugar was available, so we got few sweet treats baked at home.

No cokes were available. Cokes were kept for our military personnel. I never even remember drinking a coke until I was seven years old and living miles from Old Mesilla. When I was seven I had a stomach problem, and the doctor said cold cokes and warm water for a whole week. Soda Fountains in drug stores had coke syrup to mix with carbonated water for fountain drinks. Coke syrup was considered a cure for stomach ailments in those days. I can still remember the druggist giving out coke syrup after I was much older. However when I was prescribed cold cokes at age seven few stores had them in stock; it was too soon after World War II.

So, momma actually had to go to a bar to get my cokes. The bar owner was so shocked to see momma walking into the bar he met her at the door. She told him what she needed, and he gave her a whole case of cokes together with some crushed ice.

After that incident of having to drink cokes I became addicted. My Uncle Luther always kept a few cokes in his icebox, so I could have one when I visited at their house.

## Chapter 6 - “Food Rationing”

One rationed item I do remember while we lived

in Old Mesilla was ketchup. One particular night daddy had stopped by Mr. Stiff's house to give him a report on the dairy farm. Walter and I went inside the house with him while momma waited in the car with Jimmy and Maxine.

The Stiffs were having supper, and his family remained at the table while Mr. Stiff answered the door, and stood visiting with daddy, while discussing the dairy and cotton business. Walter and I stood close to daddy.

Walter kept staring at the ketchup in the ketchup bottle on the table. When daddy picked me up and took Walter by the hand to go, Walter wouldn't budge. He just kept his eye on the ketchup. Daddy could not pull Walter away. When Mrs. Stiff saw what Walter was staring at, she handed him the bottle of ketchup. Ketchup, a 'rationed item' in the hands of a little boy who loved to put it on beans, meat, bread or even a sandwich. Ketchup was the best thing happening to Walter Henry that entire week.

Most people who had the items we couldn't find in stores bought them at black market stores. One day my momma learned of a black market basement store in a little town called Mesquite, New Mexico. The store was on the main highway running north and south through Mesquite. The store appeared about the same as Samples Grocery. However, the basement of the store was loaded with items we hadn't had in over a year. Momma went there, and I remember going down the stairs in the store with her. The stairs were very steep. Momma shopped to her heart's content. There were so many groceries and household items she needed for so long.

There was a huge fight between daddy and momma at our house that night. Daddy was classified as a 4-F for military enlistment, because he was a farmer. Daddy had served in the CCC Boys (Civilian Conservation Corps) However, the United States of America needed the farmers to produce crops to keep our country supplied with food and other necessities. I don't actually remember the fight; I only remember the story momma told of the fight. After that I remember momma telling me she was able to get friends to bring her sugar from Juarez, Mexico when they went there for other items. Momma said when she got items from Mexico through friends that went over to Juarez she always told daddy, "Samples got some sugar" or whatever ever item he was questioning she may have went to the black market for.

The other information I remember momma speak-

ing about during World War II was rationing stamps, gasoline, tires for automobiles, parts for automobiles, certain types of clothing, and shoes. Momma said cheap shoes like tennis shoes made of cloth were sold without stamps. Most of our shoe stamps went to keep Maxine in shoes, since she was now in first grade, and needed decent shoes for school. Daddy also needed shoes for work. The rest of the family wore the cheap tennis shoes we could buy without shoe stamps. Also, momma sometimes got clothing and shoes at a store known as Willis Surplus Store. When we went into to Las Cruces we often stopped at that store just to visit with Mrs. Willis. I still remember going to the Willis Surplus for several years after I started to grade school.

#### Chapter 7 - "Cotton Pickers Wanted"

During World War II daddy could find no US Citizens willing to pick our cotton. The United States was opening up factories, with better paying jobs, so there was a mass exit from the cotton fields. Our Country was involved in World War II, so we had to produce what we needed to fight the war. Those cotton fields that helped so many Americans keep "body and soul" together during the Great Depression were now being neglected. Momma told many stories of how her birth-family had to leave their farm in Hall County Texas, and pick cotton all the way from South Texas to Phoenix, Arizona during the Great Depression.

Daddy attempted to get relatives to come and pick cotton. He even offered to rent a house for them to live in, but they didn't want it. I remember when our grandma (on momma's side) came with her youngest daughter A-line to pick cotton. Daddy found them a small adobe house near us. There was a water pump in the front yard of the house; A handle on the pump, with a pump spout. The spout was long enough to hang a bucket handle on while one pumped water to fill it. Momma's youngest sister, A-line did not want to live in a house where she had to pump water. A-line wanted a house in Las Cruces with running water, and transportation provided to the cotton field each day. I can still remember Aunt A-line grabbing the handle of the pump, and kicking the pump with her foot. Also, there was no inside bathroom, just an outside toilet. Consequently daddy had to take grandma and Aunt A-line into Las Cruces, and buy them bus tickets back to Carlsbad, New Mexico where they lived.



Our relatives wanted those jobs in factories or other places. United States citizens had left the cotton fields. Very soon we would start employing Mexican citizens to come and help harvest our crops. Several years later I remember farmers in the Mesilla Valley providing places for Mexican citizens to live in old farm buildings while they picked cotton. Many Farmers even had bunk-houses for the Mexican cotton pickers. The money Mexican citizens earned during the cotton harvest helped them survive the next year at home in Mexico. But, Mexicans coming to pick didn't happen the year I speak of. The Mexicans started coming in the early to middle fifties.

Daddy didn't have time to run the dairy for Mr. Stiff to bring people from Las Cruces and the surrounding small towns to pick cotton.

My momma had a great idea though.

"What about those Germans in the German prison camp?" momma asked daddy.

What prisoners?" daddy questioned.

"I heard the German prisoners are willing to work, and will pick cotton so they have money to keep themselves in clothes, personal items, and cigarettes if they

smoke," momma replied. "They live over close to Mesquite in make-shift barracks designed to house the prisoners the United States captured."

"Well I will check it out. Will you stay at the cotton trailer and weigh the cotton, and keep track of what we owe them? You can take the kids with you, and they can play around the trailer, and take naps in our old Hudson." daddy said.

And, I do remember that cotton field, and playing around the trailer, and taking naps in the old Hudson. Especially the day Maxine and Walter pushed the starter button on the old Hudson until the battery ran down.

"What happened to the car?" Momma asked Walter.

Walter answered, "I pushed the button and grind it, and grind it; and then Maxine pushed the button, and grinds it, and grinds it. We just grind it, and grind it 'till it won't grind no more." Walter answered.

My older siblings ran down the car battery, which was easy to do with a button to start the car in plain view.

The first day the German prisoners came to pick cotton the guard with them threw his gun on the ditch bank, and asked momma for a cotton sack.

"I might as well make some extra money while I am guarding these Germans."

"What about those German prisoners?" Momma asked the guard.

"Oh, they ain't going to go nowhere or cause any trouble, they never had it as good as they have it in this United States of America," the guard answered momma.

So, momma helped daddy get the cotton crop in that fall. Momma's and daddy's generation knew what hard work was all about. That was their way of life. Momma and daddy lived through the Great Depression working many hard jobs to keep "Body and Soul together" as Momma often said.

## Chapter 8 - "The Town of Old Mesilla."

The hair fixing place was on the right side of the road as we headed east down the main street of Old Mesilla. It was a small one story building that set next to some taller building. A few years back I saw a TV story of a hotel in Old Mesilla that was haunted. I was impressed that the hotel I caught a glimpse of in the TV Story was the same hotel built next to the hair fixing

place momma went to when I was a child.

Just momma and me. She had her hair rolled up on one of those machines that heated the hair, and curled it. Momma looked like a beautiful movie star when she came out of the hair fixing place.

Momma had rolled my hair on bobby pins before we went to the hair fixing place, and I pretended I got it done when momma got her hair fixed. Daddy remarked how good our hair looked. I put my hand on the side of my head, and paraded around for him.

Maxine had natural curly hair, and she never went to the hair fixing place. Her hair always looked great.

The La Posta is a very famous restaurant with its beginning popularity in Old Mesilla, New Mexico where it first started. The La Posta is built in an old adobe building.

Momma often told me she took us children to the La Posta to eat at least once a week. The reason we went to the La Posta was because beef was so limited in the grocery stores. Beef was not available because it went to our military posts to feed the troops during World War II. Although farmers usually had a supply of meat for their families, daddy did not raise beef that year.

I don't remember going to the La Posta when I was a child, so I probably was not too impressed with getting a meal that wasn't more to my liking, like peanut butter and jelly.

Of course, the La Posta gained popularity in the Southwest all the way to El Paso, Texas where I lived and worked for twenty-six years. My birthplace in Old Mesilla was quite honored by co-workers and friends who wanted to go to the La Posta to eat Mexican Food.

Going to the La Posta with friends after I was grown was the first time I got acquainted with the restaurant. I don't remember seeing peanut butter and jelly on the menu even one time. I bet my momma stuck a sandwich with my favorite ingredients in her purse when we went there for beef during World War II.

Yes, Old Mesilla, the cotton fields, the canals, the cotton trailers, taking naps in the old Hudson near the cotton trailer, the German soldiers/prisoners picking

cotton, Samples Grocery, The La Posta, and simple history that lived in the mind of a small child.

Chapter 9 – “History moved on – The Cotton Trailer Moved on too!”

Towns like Old Mesilla, New Mexico have been re-modeled to attract tourists.

However, I prefer to remember the cotton field, the cotton trailer, and a way of life that vanished too soon from Old Mesilla, New Mexico culture.

Cotton picking machines were invented during the late 1950s, and the cotton field with a cotton trailer waiting to be filled with cotton picked became a memory. Children were no longer allowed to take time out of school to pick cotton. Most parents would not let children pick cotton except after school and on Saturdays anyway. My stepfather took us kids to the cotton field on Saturday mornings, but soon stopped. At two cents a pound for the cotton we picked, his gas money wasn't worth it. He quickly decided a small allowance to do jobs around the house was much more profitable to our momma.

My brothers soon found jobs at the golf course as caddies, and I got paid to help momma with chores around the house.

I love and cherish the days spent with my momma and my brothers at the Old Mesilla cotton field playing around the cotton trailer. My older sister Maxine was there too when she was out of school.

The cotton trailer and the cotton field may not seem very historical in some circles; yet it was a ‘Way of Life’ that is gone, but forever linked to my family. It gives me a sense of pride to have been able to earn a few dollars picking cotton after school and on weekends. Earning a few dollars taught children their labor was valuable.

I'm proud that I took naps in an Old Hudson parked near a cotton field in Old Mesilla, New Mexico.

“Yes, Mr. Border Patrolman, Old Mesilla, New Mexico,” and I might add, “I am mighty proud to be a US Citizen born in Old Mesilla, New Mexico.”

## Mesilla Comes Alive\*

By C.W. “Buddy” Ritter with Craig Holden

It is commonly believed, and noted in many histories of the area and time of the founding of Mesilla, that the town was created because the Mexican settlers of Doña Ana wanted to live in Mexico, not the U.S. And after the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo was signed in 1848, Doña Ana, lying east of the river, was clearly in the U.S. now (and possibly even in Texas, if that new state’s claims were to be accepted). The theory is that because of the mistakes in the original Disturnell map used after the treaty was signed, and also by the surveyors, the plateau where Mesilla would be founded now lay in Mexico, that is, west of the river and below the mistaken border. However, the fact is that the border was not agreed on until late in 1850 and was not officially established until the spring of 1851. It is not entirely clear whether, before that, the area west of the Rio Grande and north of the traditional border extending west of El Paso was considered by the U.S. and Mexico to be U.S. territory or not.

Almost immediately after the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo was signed in 1848, making New Mexico an American territory, change came to the Mesilla Valley. A US Military outpost was established in the town of Doña Ana for one thing, to help protect against Indian raids. Initially, it consisted of 87 men led by Lieutenant Delos B. Sackett. Other U.S. citizens were moving into the area too, looking for land. The problem was that, while there was plenty of land around Doña Ana, not much of it was irrigated and farmable. Also, in spite of the military presence, the Indian raids grew worse again, making farming very difficult. Livestock was stolen and settlers killed.

Additionally, some of the newcomers were Texans still claiming that this territory east of the river was part of their state, and, although Guadalupe Hidalgo guaranteed that any previous settlers could keep their land, they began either taking over homesteads outright or laying claims.

In any case, in early 1849 a group of settlers established a camp to the south and began to dig a new acequia from the river. Later that year, the Prefect, or

*Alcalde*, of Doña Ana asked Lt. Sackett to survey a new town site near the end of the acequia. After drawing lots from new settlers, Lt. Delos Bennett Sackett laid out an 84-block grid using rawhide ropes. The blocks were divided into quarter lots, and twenty eight of them (112 lots) were soon settled. This would become the Mesquite neighborhood in the city of Las Cruces, which still of course stands today. The name Las Cruces ostensibly originated from an Apache massacre of about forty travelers from Taos, perhaps in 1830, or 1839, or 1840, near the site. The resulting “garden of crosses” was in plain site of passing travelers and came to mark the area.

Also in 1849 at least a few hardy campers began to cross the river and settle on the little plateau overlooking the river from the west, the same plateau where Onate had camped hundreds of years before -- the place he called the *Trenquel de la Mesilla*. There were no acequias dug yet, and the real influx would not begin for another year, in the spring of 1850, so life would have been rough at best.

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In 1849 a letter to the governor of Chihuahua asks for clarification on exactly where “La Mecia” is located so that settlers “... may move their people, and they may know under what country’s law they must make their petition.”<sup>1</sup> Thomas goes on to say, though, based on his research into the earliest title claims in Mesilla that, “In March of 1850, both Mexico and the United States assume that Mesilla is part of the new United States territory of New Mexico, since it had always been part of New Mexico.”<sup>2</sup>

But John Russell Bartlett, the US Boundary Commissioner appointed to sort out the surveying situation, wrote that after the war:

the Mexican population occupying the eastern bank of the Rio Grand in Texas and New Mexico were greatly annoyed by the encroachments of the Americans, and by their determined efforts to despoil them

of their landed property. This was done by the latter either settling among them, or in some instances forcibly occupying their dwellings and cultivated spots. In most cases, however, it was done by putting "Texas head-right" on their property . . . [w]ith these land certificates . . . many Americans flocked to the valley of the Rio Grande, and in repeated instances, located them on the property which for a century had been in the quiet possession of the descendants of the old Spanish colonists.<sup>3</sup>

Although the US government took issue with these new land claims and sent troops to protect the rights of the Mexican settlers, and though Texas gave up its claim in the Compromise of 1850, many settlers had already by then moved across the river to Mesilla.<sup>4</sup> Bartlett says that, "More than half the population of Doña Ana removed to Mesilla within a year."<sup>5</sup> By that year of 1850, the census counted about 700 people in Mesilla.

Other research seems to indicate as well that settlers were coming into Mesilla as early as 1849, and that most of them were not new Americans and many were not from Doña Ana. "In the summer of 1849 . . . colonists has begun to arrive in the area of La Mesilla from northern New Mexico and from the Pass -- ethnically different Indian, mestizo, Spaniard -- all of them Mexican citizens."<sup>6</sup>

In any case, what is known for sure is that on March 1 of 1850 a man named Don Rafael Ruelas, who had previously led followers from a grant near El Paso to Doña Ana,<sup>7</sup> and possibly believing (according to Bartlett) that he was returning from Doña Ana to Mexican territory, led a group "most of whom had been domiciled at Doña Ana [to abandon] their homes on account of their many grievances, and [move] to the lands known as the Mesilla, where they established themselves."<sup>8</sup>

But it is also clear that Mesilla was not only populated originally by disgruntled Mexicans from Doña Ana. Thomas tells us that both Americans and Mexicans had settled there from the first, including a man named Thomas Bull who testified later that he first came to the area of Doña Ana as a clerk under Doniphan, and later that he, "moved to Mesilla in March or April of 1851 when it was still considered part of the United States. He also says that the townsite was surveyed at that time and divided into 160-acre lots, measuring 960 by 960

varas."<sup>9</sup>

And there were apparently other Americans as well. "Among the first Americans to establish themselves on the Mesilla side of the river was Louis William Geck, a private honorably discharged at Doña Ana from Company H, First Regiment United States Dragoons. Don Luis, as he came to be known, was born in Poland."<sup>10</sup> Other former-soldiers who came down with Doniphan settled in the area as well -- from Doña Ana to Las Cruces to Mesilla.

Bartlett, though, writing of these earliest years in Mesilla, said that "Very few Americans ever settled there -- in fact, none but traders, and it is probably that there never were twenty altogether."<sup>11</sup>

In any case, Mesilla would grow after this while Doña Ana and Las Cruces remained very small towns of only a few hundred people each, although Las Cruces would become, for the time being, the Doña Ana county seat.

By very late 1850, Bartlett, who had been appointed to step in and straighten out the confusion engendered by the faulty Disturnell map, came to a conclusion about which country Mesilla lay within. His Mexican counterpart, General Pedro García Conde, argued that, based on latitude and longitude in the original map, the border should be located some 34 miles north and 130 miles east of where Bartlett thought it should be. The men struck a deal, agreeing that Mexico would keep the Mesilla Valley, or at least part of it, and the US would hold the Santa Rita mines. The line, based on what became known as the Bartlett-Conde Compromise, was placed just south of Las Cruces, heading westward from the Rio Grande for a distance before cutting north to the Gila River, and westward along it from there, passing well north of modern day Tucson. Later, Bartlett's supervisor, who had been sick at the time of the compromise, would refuse to sign the agreement, stating that Bartlett was duped.<sup>12</sup> Still, for the time being at least, the Bartlett-García Conde Line was accepted and Mesilla, since it lay to the west of the river and slightly to the south, now lay officially in Mexico.

In April of 1851, upon confirmation that the Conde-Bartlett compromise placed Mesilla in Mexico, the citizens fired cannons and had a grand ball to celebrate. Thomas Bull, the former US army clerk, was not pleased. In his testimony he stated that "as soon as he learned that Mesilla was part of Mexico, he moved

to Las Cruces, because he wanted to be in the United States.”<sup>13</sup>

The Mexican government immediately passed the Colonization Act of May 22, 1851, and began to issue grants in this new area of settlement under the auspices of Father Ramon Ortiz, “the *cura* at Paso del Norte...”<sup>14</sup> Ortiz would become the first commissioner of Mesilla, and would name Don Rafael Ruelas the first *alcalde*, or magistrate.<sup>15</sup> John Russell Bartlett himself described the new community that same year -- “It consists of mud, or chiefly of stick houses, and has been settled within two years by Mexicans who have abandoned their residences on our side of the river . . . .” In August of that year, Ortiz issued the first deed in Mesilla to Antonio Uribes and by late 1851 a census showed over 1200 people living there.<sup>16</sup> New families each received a quarter of a grid block. In early 1852, Ortiz would issue the Mesilla Civil Colony Grant.

Father Ortiz also founded the San Albino church, and the first permanent priest of San Albino, Bernardino Hinojos, was appointed in 1852. It was named, in the manner of such churches then, after the first acequia that came into Mesilla, on San Albino day. The common conception of these earliest years of San Albino are that services were held in a rectory or some other mud building on the south side of the plaza, across from where the church now stands. “The settlers soon established a central plaza which included a Catholic church on the south side of the plaza. Constructed of mud and logs, this primitive structure was named San Albino.”<sup>17</sup> And Maude McFie in her 1903 thesis quotes the Hon. Horace Stephenson as having said, of Mesilla in 1853, “I do not think there were twelve houses in La Mesilla then. It was a very large heavily populated town, but the houses were all jacals; even the church was only a jacal, and was situated then on the east side of the Plaza, opposite from where it is now.”

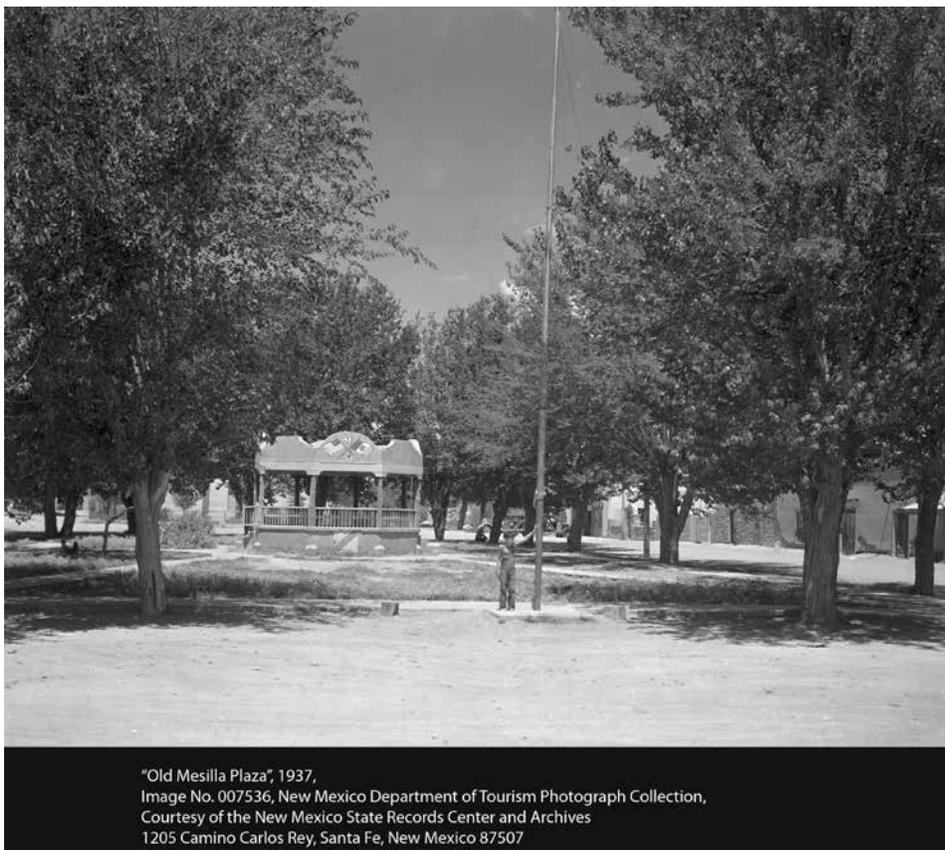
However, it is not clear what direct evidence supports the claim of such a structure on the south (or east?) side of the square. There is none at least in

the official records.

The most commonly suggested location for an “original” church is the block immediately south of the plaza, known as the Overland Stage block, but the property deeds fully account for the owners of that block with no sign of church ownership . . . . There is also no evidence of the existing church block being purchased in the deed records. When Las Cruces is laid out by Lieutenant Sackett, a church lot is located, which is the norm for Western towns at the time. These arguments convince this author that the Mesilla church was always located on the block where it is now.<sup>18</sup>

The first permanent church building north of the square was begun in 1855 and completed in 1857.

A couple of interesting notes on Father Ortiz: when the Texas-Santa Fe expedition was captured by Mexican forces in 1840 and led south, as described above, they were, according to the memoir of George Kendall, in pretty bad shape when they reached El Paso. There, there were taken care of, saved even, by none other than Father Ramon Ortiz. Some years later, Ortiz was



“Old Mesilla Plaza”, 1937,  
Image No. 007536, New Mexico Department of Tourism Photograph Collection,  
Courtesy of the New Mexico State Records Center and Archives  
1205 Camino Carlos Rey, Santa Fe, New Mexico 87507

captured by Doniphan when he occupied El Paso after the battle of Brazito and held for a time.<sup>19</sup>In 1853 Ortiz was replaced as commissioner of Mesilla by Guadalupe Miranda. Miranda then separated the Mesilla Civil Colony Grant into two separate grants -- the Santo Tomás de Iturbide Grant and the Picacho Grant to the north.<sup>20</sup> By 1854 a military census listed a population in Mesilla of more than 3,000, compared with only 600 in Las Cruces.

So it was, in any case, that the town of Mesilla was born fairly abruptly -- perhaps so that many of its residents could escape the US and return to Mexico. Sadly perhaps for them, this situation would only last a couple of more years.

For another force was coming to bear on the area --

the need for reliable efficient transportation. As it was, goods headed west could only proceed beyond Paso del Norte by wagon. This situation would persist for some time, which would actually benefit Mesilla greatly, but there was already a strong sense that a railroad, sooner or later, would eventually need to come through the area, connecting the south and Texas with the new southwest and California. And that sense doomed the Bartlett-García Conde agreement as to where the US now ended and Mexico began.

\* This article was adapted from a work-in-progress tentatively entitled *Mesilla: The Life of the Town and Its Valley*, by C.W. "Buddy" Ritter with Craig Holden.

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## ENDNOTES

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# Thomas Casad: Agricultural Editor of Mesilla

Edited by Rick Hendricks

*As a young adult in southern Illinois, Thomas Casad developed an interest in scientific agriculture.<sup>1</sup> When he relocated to southern California, he continued to explore the latest developments in farming, ranching, and the orchard business by experimenting with new crops, different varieties, and animal husbandry. After the Casad family relocated to the Mesilla Valley in 1874, Casad became known as an agricultural innovator. Beyond being an advocate for advances in agriculture, he considered the life of a newspaperman to be a high calling.<sup>2</sup> His 1876 acquisition of an interest in the Mesilla Valley Independent with partners Albert J. Fountain and John S. Crouch allowed Casad to combine editing a newspaper with expounding on the virtues of the best modern agricultural practices.<sup>3</sup>*

*His first foray into the world of the newspaper columnist took place with the inaugural issue of the Mesilla Valley Independent, which appeared on 23 June 1877. Casad found much to be admired in the Mesilla Valley, but he believed that it would never reach its potential unless the people who worked the land embraced the modern world.*

*Below is a series of articles that Thomas Casad wrote and published between June and December 1877. Casad's column's are transcribed here exactly as they appear in the newspaper to preserve his occasionally idiosyncratic spelling. The text that appears in Italic type is the contribution of the editor.*

## Introductory<sup>4</sup>

A column or two of the *Independent* will be devoted to the Agriculture, Fruit and Grazing interests of New Mexico. All the proprietors of this paper are engaged to some extent in one or the other of these pursuits and look upon them as first in importance of all the avocations of man assigned him in his primal purity and pointed out by the hand of God Himself. The most necessary because both food and clothing are thereby obtained, the only two indispensable elements of man's existence. To the quiet peaceful and ennobling pursuits of husbandry men have instinctively turned in all ages of the world.

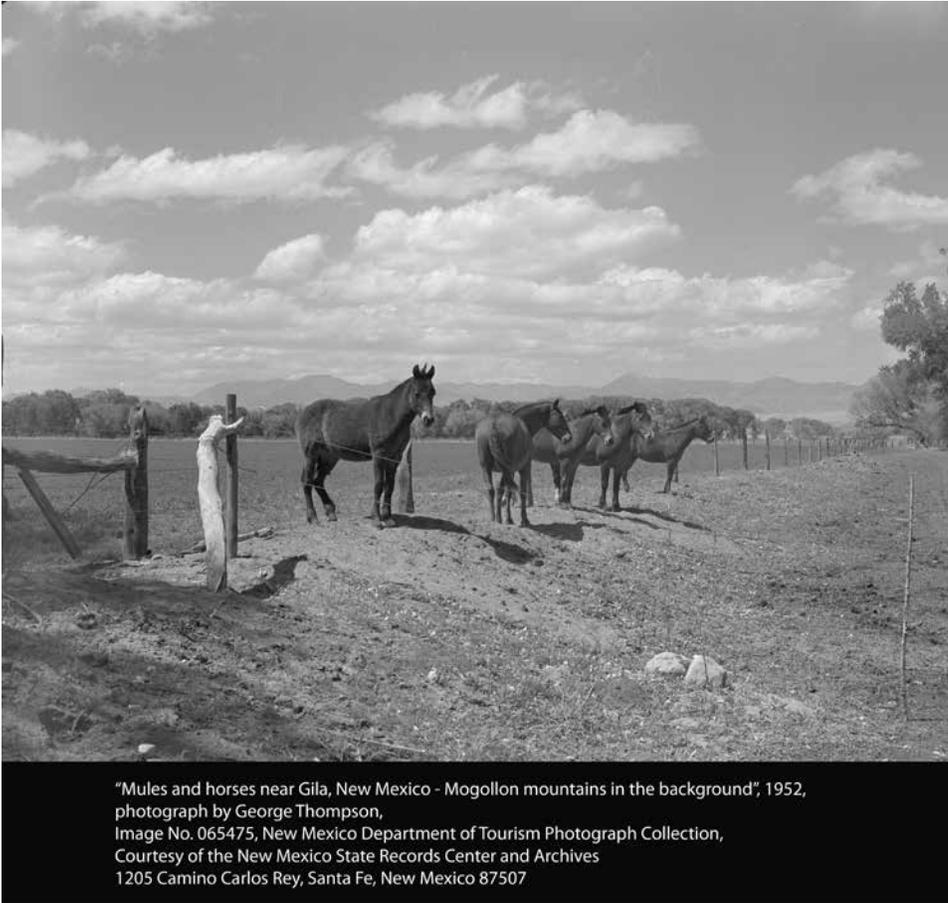
It will be the aim of the *Independent* to evolve and gather up all the facts possible relating to these most important pursuits. Although the Valley of the Rio

Grande has been settled and cultivated for more than two centuries, no advance has been made in modes of farming; the same rude implements used in the Valley of the Nile in the days of the Pharaohs are to be seen in use in the Mesilla Valley to-day, the ox harnessed by the horns to a forked stick constituting beam handles shovel and all the paraphernalia of a plough in one single stock, a tool that inverts no soil, destroys no weed. This poor and shiftless method of farming barely affords a subsistence, and gives a dreary and desolate appearance to one of the finest valleys of the world. We propose to do all in our power to change this, by encouraging the introduction and growth of good stock and fruits of all kinds adapted to our soil and climate; by the introduction and use of improved implements of husbandry; by encouraging thrift, industry and economy. We hope to help to make our population not only self sustaining but in a few years to build up hundreds of prosperous and happy ones.

*Tom Casad probably had as much practical experience in the production of wheat and corn as any man his age. He had grown up on the Illinois prairie and seen the development of the Deere plow and other pieces of farm machinery first hand.<sup>5</sup> He and his brother were also mill operators in Summerfield, Illinois, where they processed grain for all the farmers for miles around.<sup>6</sup> His advice on preparing the land for planting, given in a column published on 30 June 1877, was adapted to the climate of the Mesilla Valley. By July of that year, Casad was able to report that construction of his grist mill in Mesilla was progressing and that the mill machinery had been shipped and was expected to arrive shortly.<sup>7</sup> By September the mill was almost ready to go into operation.*

## Preparing Land<sup>8</sup>

Now that the wheat crop will soon be harvested, the earliest opportunity should be taken to prepare ground for the succeeding crop, if wheat stubble is selected, the ground should be thoroughly irrigated and as soon as it is sufficiently dry to bear the team it should be deeply ploughed with a good turning plough, so as to completely cover and hide the stubble, it should then be well harrowed; this cultivation with the usual amount



"Mules and horses near Gila, New Mexico - Mogollon mountains in the background", 1952, photograph by George Thompson, Image No. 065475, New Mexico Department of Tourism Photograph Collection, Courtesy of the New Mexico State Records Center and Archives 1205 Camino Carlos Rey, Santa Fe, New Mexico 87507

of rain in the months of July, August and September will be all the cultivation needed until the proper time for seeding, which, in this valley should be commenced about the middle of September, and may be continued to the middle of January or first of February with an equal and almost certain prospect of a good crop. Throughout this lengthened time of seeding no irrigation will be necessary after the first ploughing, provided, no irrigation is subsequently resorted to, as the summer rains will keep the ground sufficiently moist to enable the farmer to plough and seed the ground. The seeding should be done by a second ploughing, sowing the seed (about fifty pounds to the acre) of the early sown and sixty of the later sown. Sow broad-cast and harrow thoroughly and *border*, which can be best and cheapest done with a good span of horses or mules and a twelve or fourteen inch turning plough, putting these furrows together about 30 feet apart. Four throngs with a cradle will cut out the space between borders. After the seeding and bordering is done leave the summer and fall rains to bring up the wheat, which, they will certainly do except in very exceptional seasons. If no rains come to bring up the wheat, irrigate about the middle of December and

not before, as the light freezing at night after this time will prevent the ground from baking and enable the wheat to come up evenly and uniformly. If the rains bring up the crop, no irrigation will be necessary until the first of April, as the cool weather of winter arrests evaporation, and the moisture rising from below will be all that is required until that time. Wheat sown in September, by the first of April will have completely covered the ground and one or two irrigations will be all that will be necessary to produce an abundant crop.

In irrigating use as little water as possible so that the ground is moistened. The tallest finest wheat in the valley is found on the borders and high spots that have only been moistened by absorption, not by submerging; on the contrary the poorest portion of the crop is invariably the lowest spot. The principal advantage in early seeding

is that the long time between seeding and harvest gives the wheat time to tiller finely, reducing the amount of seed necessary, and enabling nature to work out and bring forth on her own plan, according to season, time of sowing and previous preparation of soil.

If corn ground is selected it should be kept free from weeds, and as soon as the crop is taken off, plough and seed as above, or if your corn is in rows 4½ feet apart, plough in your wheat with a single horse plough between the rows, this will leave the ground in a shape that the water in irrigating will follow the middle of the rows without completely submerging the entire ground, which will be advantage as no cross bordering will be necessary.

*Although not the first farmer to grow alfalfa in New Mexico, Casad was without doubt the most important booster for the crop and is generally considered to be the first large-scale producer in the Mesilla Valley. He encouraged his fellow agriculturalists in the Mesilla to plant alfalfa. Casad believed that the climate of southern New Mexico was especially well suited to alfalfa production. He also believed that alfalfa pastures provided the best forage for animals. He was for many years the only person who grew alfalfa*

*to process it for seed (in addition to the more traditional hay), which he did at his mill in Mesilla.<sup>9</sup> His death in 1885 caused an immediate shortage of alfalfa seed, a situation that was not remedied for a number of years.*

#### Alfalfa as a Forage Plant<sup>10</sup>

There is no forage plant known that yields stock food so abundantly as Alfalfa.

It is native to Southern Europe, and was carried by the Spaniards to their settlements of both North and South America. In this climate it produces four good crops of hay yearly; already, the present season, two good crops have been taken from the ground and a vigorous start for the third is made. The yield of each cutting is at least two tons, making in the four cuttings eight tons to the acre of No. 1 hay each year.

fail to seed down one to Alfalfa. One acre properly seeded and cared for will produce an abundance of food for eight or ten head of horses or cows, provided it is cut and fed in stalls.

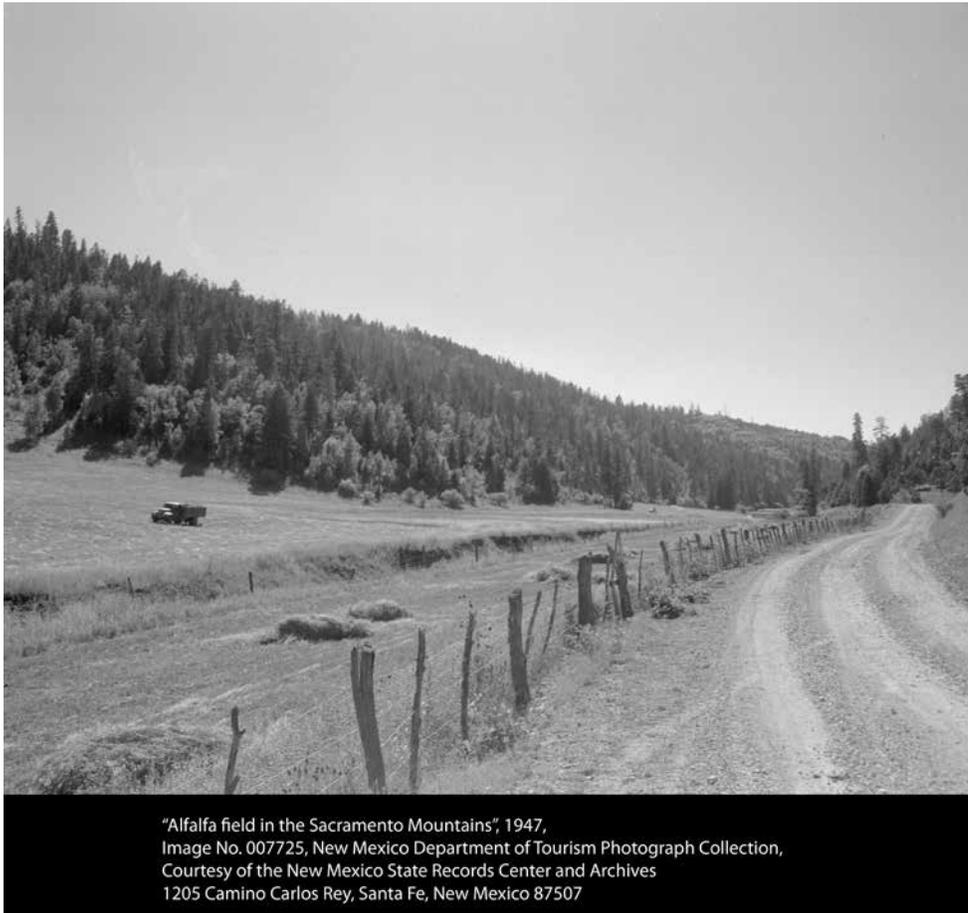
The root of this plant permeates the soil to a great depth, which makes it superior to all other grasses for a dry country.

The second year in the Valley of the Rio Grande it will produce good crops without irrigation, and no other grass makes, as Alfalfa does, a continuous and uniform growth throughout the entire season. If you have five or ten acres, seed down one or two to Alfalfa. If you farm one hundred seed ten to twenty; it will pay better than any kind of grain.

#### The Proper Time and Manner of Seeding Alfalfa<sup>11</sup>

First prepare the ground by at least 2 thorough ploughings and harrowings; if your ground is level, and lays well for irrigating, border it about 60 feet between borders by throwing three furrows together with a large plough and good team in the direction that your ground decends. It is not necessary to border cross-wise, unless your ground is quite uneven. The ground should be thoroughly harrowed before the bordering is done, so as to leave the surface smooth; then sow your seed at the rate of eight pounds to the acre, and leave the rains to bring it up, as it will come up more evenly and with much less waste of seed than to bring it up by irrigation, and, beside, will make a more uniform and vigorous growth, as, during the hot month, after irrigating, the ground hardens and crusts so quickly that a large percent of the seed is lost from inability to break the crust; and the

remainder grows feebly, and a portion will die or drown out in subsequent irrigations, as from necessity, when you once commence to irrigate you will be compelled to continue it or loose both seed and work. But if you rely on the rains to bring up the seed, once up, in well



"Alfalfa field in the Sacramento Mountains", 1947, Image No. 007725, New Mexico Department of Tourism Photograph Collection, Courtesy of the New Mexico State Records Center and Archives 1205 Camino Carlos Rey, Santa Fe, New Mexico 87507

In this climate and latitude it affords the best of pasture for all kinds of domestic animals nine or ten months of the year. Even hogs will keep in fine growing condition nine months in the year on Alfalfa alone.

No man who has as much as five acres of land should

prepared land, the roots will follow down to permanent moisture and in a very short time, will penetrate the ground as fast at least as the top runs up.

Any time between the Fifteenth of July and the First of October will do to seed, but the earlier the better.

Do not allow heavy stock of any kind to run on your ground after seeding, as all large animals will tread the seed, on which they place their feet, so low, that it will never vegetate and reach the surface.

If from any cause you fail to seed in summer or early autumn, or, from want of rain your seeding fails to come up, then irrigate about the First of November, one irrigation will then be sufficient as the shortness of the days and low temperature arrests evaporation and causes your land to remain sufficiently damp for weeks.

Do not irrigate young alfalfa so as to allow the water to remain on the ground long at a time; as twelve hours submerging under a hot sun will as effectually kill it as a fire would.

In all portions of New Mexico as in California the great enemy to alfalfa is the gopher they will gather by thousands on alfalfa lands and unless destroyed will completely honeycomb the ground so that a mule or horse can with difficulty pass over it.

You can destroy them effectually by irrigations in December or January. A throughout wetting of the little pirate at this season of the year is certain death, as the water drives from their holes and not even a lodgment in the borders will save them from destruction. You can not injure alfalfa by irrigating in winter though it is easily done in summer. The seed of alfalfa is of the same weight as wheat bulk, for bulk in sowing you can cast the seed of alfalfa as you would wheat. Take of clean seed all you can grip between the thumb and the index, and next finger of the right hand and cast your seed as you bring up your right foot at each step, casting with the same force as you would for wheat and you will not fail to seed your ground evenly and uniformly.

*Not all of Casad's innovative ideas attracted takers. Frequently in contact by letter with friends he left in California and other places, Casad was inspired to propose a get-rich-scheme to readers of the Independent whereby enterprising individuals could purchase California mares and jacks from Missouri or Kentucky and transport them to southern New Mexico. By means of natural reproduction, a fine herd could be had for a modest investment. Breeding the California mare with the Missouri or Kentucky jack*

*would produce a mule superior to any available locally. Apparently, no one followed Casad's advice, however sound the economics of it, and the Mesilla Valley did not become a center for breeding mules.*

#### A Chance To Make A Fortune<sup>12</sup>

A few days ago we received a letter from a friend in California inquiring as to the grazing advantages of New Mexico, and stating that he contemplated bringing through to this Territory a band of California mares. This kind of stock can now be bought in Los Angeles county, at from 7 to 10 dollars per head; all the incidental expenses of buying up and driving to this Territory, would not increase the cost above 15 dollars per head or 1500 dollars per 100 head.

Two good Missouri or Kentucky jacks would probably cost delivered here \$1500 more, in all \$3000, with the stock properly cared for it would be safe to count on an increase of 80 mules each year, for ten to fifteen years without any additional cost except that of herding; the increase at a low estimated value could be placed at 50 dollars per head at two years old, or \$8000 a year from the time the first lot came of proper age to market.

There is sufficient time to collect this stock and get it on good range by the 1<sup>st</sup> of March next, which would be soon enough for the year 1878. There would be but one contingency as to certain success and that would be the danger of having the stock stolen. This could only be avoided by constant vigilance and locating 100 or more miles from the Mexican line.

The California mare is a large and better animal than the native mare of the Territory, a good stocky animal with heavy body and limbs; bred to a good jack, they bring a mule twice as large as the average Mexican mule and of equal stamina and endurance.

Fifty or one hundred enterprises and investments of this kind would not affect the price of this kind of stock in California so as to increase first cost, nor will the time ever come when the mule will be in less demand in New Mexico than now; but on the contrary as the grazing and ranching elements of the territory become developed, a constantly increasing demand for mules will grow up, as settlements increase and new enterprises are projected.

*When Thomas Casad arrived in Mesilla in 1874 there were many orchards producing many varieties of fruit, especially apples.<sup>13</sup> There were also a number of vineyards. But there was no nursery, which meant that everything--seeds, fruit trees, and cuttings--had*

*to be shipped from outside of New Mexico, and items arrived from all over the country for Casad. This method was expensive, and much loss resulted from the rigors of lengthy transport.*

#### A Nursery<sup>14</sup>

One of the most notable wants of this valley is the establishment of a nursery. Our fine climate--adapted to the growing to perfection of a large variety of fruits—makes tree planting a matter of first importance. Heretofore the various kinds of fruits of value introduced here, have come through the mails; not less than thirty thousand grafts and roots of various kinds have found their way here in this manner during the last three years from the various nurseries of the old states.

This mode of obtaining fruit trees is not only expensive, but is attended with much loss by injury from the long exposure of ten to fifteen days in the transit, and the root and Scion are often displaced from the rough handling incidental to mail carrying.

We now have in Mesilla and its environs a number of orchards in bearing—notably of the apple—where the quality of fruit has been subjected to the test of soil and climate and the effects produced, thereby fixing their local value, the Eastern importations coming on will increase the number to one hundred or more of catalogue lists of apples from which to select. This is, and will be a nucleus on which to build up a nursery business on a safe and cheap plan without subjecting the nurseryman to the time, expense and trouble of testing his varieties. This is not only true of apples, but also of pears, peaches, apricots, almonds and many other varieties of fruits. Now to a young man who has a fair knowledge of the business, who is willing to work and persevere and build himself up from humble beginnings, who realizes that ends are accomplished by energy diligence and industry only, the valley of Mesilla affords rare inducements. Fifty to one hundred thousand trees could be disposed of annually in the immediate vicinity of this valley on the Texas side of the Rio Grande, and on the opposite side in the State of Chihuahua, the Mexican population are beginning to realize and appreciate the value of good fruit. Two or three good canvassers would dispose of a large number of trees in the course of a winter materially aided by the fact that through the entire winter, from the date of the first frosts in November to the last in the spring, a period of about five months, trees can be taken up and reset with perfect safety. As the mercury never falls but a few

degrees below the freezing point, grafts can be placed in the nursery row during the entire winter which will greatly reduce the labor and trouble ordinarily attached to the business. The length of the growing season, the convenience of water which can be had whenever required will enable the nurseryman to make his trees reach a height of from four to six feet the first season, and of the proper size and age to dispose of. The fig and pommegranite grow here, the olive will, but has never been introduced. Thousands of evergreens could be disposed of here could they be obtained at reasonable cost and trouble.

*It is difficult to imagine anyone who was a more tireless promoter of New Mexico than Thomas Casad. From the time he arrived in the Mesilla Valley, Casad wrote to friends in places he had lived in earlier times, such as Illinois and California, extolling the agricultural virtues of New Mexico. He also maintained a correspondence with former residents of the Mesilla Valley who relocated to other parts of the country, such as Judge Joseph Gillette Knapp, who settled in Florida and became a pioneer in the citrus industry.<sup>15</sup> In this role, Casad responded to queries about New Mexico received by his newspaper. On one occasion, in August 1877, he saw fit to publish his response to an inquiry about southern New Mexico.*

#### Agricultural<sup>16</sup>

We have recently received a letter from Lincoln, Nebraska, making enquiries about this portion of New Mexico that we shall answer in this column.

“Do you have excessively hot weather?”

*Answer,* The mercury has gone up the present season to 106 degrees in the shade one day only, but has ranged from 96 to 102 degrees for several weeks past; but in consequence of the dryness of the atmosphere and the gradual and almost imperceptible change from the coolest to the warmest portions of the year the heat is not oppressive. Sun stroke is unknown here, and men toil through the day and suffer little inconvenience from heat.

“Are the nights cool?”

*Answer,* Reasonably so.

“Are the valleys hot?”

*Answer,* More so that the mountainous portions.

“Can one by going a short distance regulate their temperature?”

*Answer,* A few hours travel will take you from almost any portion of the Rio Grande valley to the mountains

where the temperature would be all that could be desired.

“Tell me if there is some place in New Mexico where a man could put in a cattle ranch where he and his cattle would be safe.”

*Answer*, Both life and property are more insecure here than in the older settled portions of the country or even in more newly settled portions where the population is not of that mixed character in New Mexico. Our proximity to the border is a drawback and we suffer the ills that all frontiers are subject to; still a man could make selections and locate himself where he would be reasonably free from molestation. For instance he could locate himself in the immediate vicinity of any of the dozen towns between the narrows of Fort Selden and the falls at El Paso, a distance of seventy miles, where lands can be had at or a small advance on government price. Two hundred acres of these lands seeded to alfalfa would enable the owner to keep in good condition from two to four hundred head of cattle that would always be under the eye of the owner or his agent and safe from molestation.

The cost of preparing and seeding lands to alfalfa would be but little more than the cost of seeding to wheat; the difference being only in the cost of seed. If desirable to fence, this can be done at a cost of seventy five cents to one dollar per rod of Adobe Wall which, in this dry climate, will last longer than a fence of wooden material in a more changeable or humid climate, and until a hedge of bois d'arc or osage orange could be grown to take its place.

To stock a cattle ranche it would be indispensable to go to some of the Old States where a good quality of stock can be obtained at their beef value; make a careful selection of one hundred heifers one or two years old, with half a dozen young bulls to serve the herd. The proper time to buy up would be in the spring; get them as near the grassy plains of Kansas as a good quality stock can be obtained; run them on the cars to beyond the thickly settled portions of the State and there drive through to this valley at the rate of eight or ten miles a day. Two yoke of oxen and a wagon will be all that is required to haul the supplies necessary for the entire trip. Three men could bring through the lot; and if under the supervision of a man of experience and judgement, they would come through in good condition and at the same

time make a good season's growth. If farrow heifers can be obtained of the age of two years they would be most suitable, as the increase of stock from that age would more than compensate for the difference in cost of yearlings compared with two year old stock.

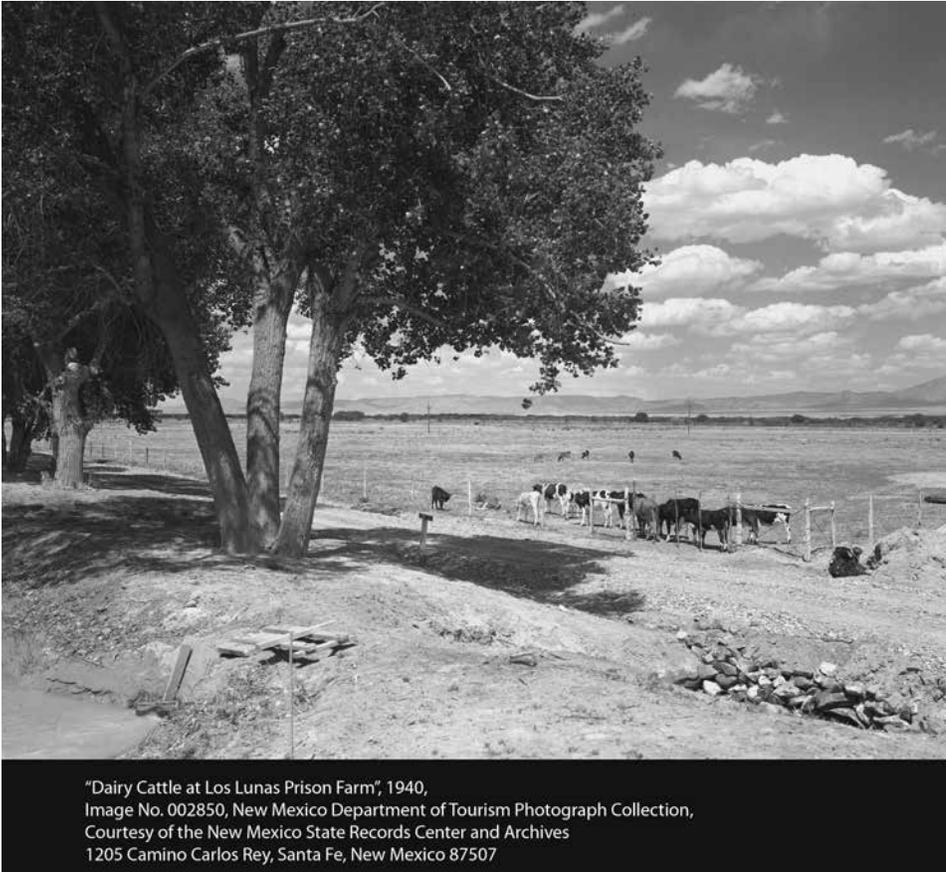
The male increase of good stock could be disposed of at fair rates to ranchmen in New Mexico, Western Texas, Chihuahua, Sonora and Arizona, a vast scope of country in which a good bovine is rarely found. Cows and heifers can be readily disposed of at good prices for years to come. Calves dropped on the road could be brought through with but little trouble by making provision to haul half a dozen at a time for a few days. A calf a week old will travel eight to ten miles a day.

This would be a good and safe business. Good stock would be much less liable to be stolen than native stock, as they would attract notice wherever seen, stock kept on good pasture will not only reach maturity at an earlier age, but will make better animals than when allowed to run at large; and, beside it gives the ranchman an opportunity by close observation and judicious crosses to improve his stock.

*Long before there was a commercial dairy in the Mesilla Valley, Casad pointed out the need for and suitability of such an operation. He believed that the area was ideal for the establishment of large-scale dairying operating on a cooperative basis. In part, this view was based on the climate, but the ample production of alfalfa, the perfect forage in Casad's opinion, was also a consideration. As late as 1885 there was still no dairy in the Mesilla Valley.<sup>17</sup> Eventually the dairy business emerged as a leading industry in New Mexico, which ranked sixth in the United States in milk production in 2006. As Casad predicted, the industry is organized into large cooperatives. One of the main reasons for the growth of the dairy industry is that from 1988 to 2007, the production of alfalfa expanded 81 percent.*

#### Dairying in New Mexico<sup>18</sup>

There is no portion of the United States where the dairy business can be undertaken and carried on with as certain a prospect of success as in Southern, New Mexico. Much of the butter, and all of the cheese consumed in the Territory comes from the States at a cost of transportation of from six to ten cents per pound. The price of butter here is never less than fifty cents per pound; that of cheese never falls below thirty cents.



"Dairy Cattle at Los Lunas Prison Farm", 1940,  
Image No. 002850, New Mexico Department of Tourism Photograph Collection,  
Courtesy of the New Mexico State Records Center and Archives  
1205 Camino Carlos Rey, Santa Fe, New Mexico 87507

Butter often commands one dollar per pound. With the rich alfalfa pastures easily obtained here, butter can be made at less outlay than in any portion of the Union except along the sea coast and the southern portion of California, small in extent where climate and moisture are equally favorable to that of New Mexico. In the great interior valleys of California, those of Sacramento and San Joaquin, the mercury occasionally in summer rises to one hundred and twenty; a point of temperature oppressive to stock and unfavorable to the manufacture of either butter or cheese; while in New Mexico the temperature rarely exceeds one hundred.

The temperature of the waters of the Mesilla Valley and the depth of sixty feet below the surface is fifty seven degrees. This is the lowest depth yet reached, by going further down the still lower temperature would be found. But water of that temperature when raised by proper appliances and allowed to pass through a properly constructed milk house would preserve the milk sweet until the cream would come to the surface and of nearly a proper temperature for churning. Twenty good cows properly cared for would afford a decent living for family of ordinary size from the product of the

dairy. The increase of stock of good quality would bring a much more and would, in time bring independence. Dairymen in California claimed that no forage plant is as favorable to the secretion of milk as alfalfa. Nor does any other produce butter and cheese of finer quality or better flavor. Twenty dairies of the above capacity would not materially appreciate the price of these products in this Territory. They could all be located on a section of land, keeping the four hundred cows and their increase for the first and second years in the best of condition. The immense yield of alfalfa, its rapid and long continued growth, enabling vast herds to subsist on a small area, makes the valley of the Rio Grande exceptionally favorable to co-operation, the milk of three thousand cows could all be brought to a central point without traveling more

than two miles.

Under the co-operative system the expense of fitting up is greatly reduced: the quality of the article improved, and better prices obtained at less cost much less in the aggregate than where each fits separately.

So complete has been the success of co-operation that the old plan is discontinued in all the principle dairy portions of the Union

The exportation of cheese and butter from the U. S. now amounts to twenty million dollars annually, and the demand is constantly increasing. With railroad facilities for transporting there is no portion of the Union that can compete with the valley of the Rio Grande in the products of the dairy. With good pastures the expense of feeding entirely saved, and with the richest and most abundant food for ten months in the year dairy products could no where else be equaled.

*Thomas Casad's career as a newspaper columnist and agricultural editor of the Mesilla Valley Independent was short lived. After six months he stopped writing articles or no longer signed them. In August 1878 he removed his name from the*

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paper's masthead and passed his editing duties to his nephew, Orla Casad.<sup>19</sup> In May 1879 Casad bought out his partners and became

sole proprietor of the *Mesilla Valley Independent*.<sup>20</sup> In July, he abruptly closed the newspaper without explanation.

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## ENDNOTES

- 1 Rick Hendricks, *The Casads: A Pioneer Family of the Mesilla Valley* (Los Ranchos, NM: Rio Grande Books in Collaboration with New Mexico State University, 2012), 19.
- 2 Hendricks, *Casads*, 70.
- 3 Hendricks, *Casads*, 76.
- 4 *Mesilla Valley Independent*, Mesilla, 23 June 1877.
- 5 Hendricks, *Casads*, 18-19.
- 6 Hendricks, *Casads*, 24-25.
- 7 Hendricks, *Casads*, 79-80.
- 8 *Mesilla Valley Independent*, Mesilla, 30 June 1877.
- 9 Hendricks, *Casads*, 152.
- 10 *Mesilla Valley Independent*, Mesilla, 7 July 1877.
- 11 *Mesilla Valley Independent*, Mesilla, 21 July 1877.
- 12 *Mesilla Valley Independent*, Mesilla, 14 July 1877.
- 13 Hendricks, *Casads*, 68-69.
- 14 *Mesilla Valley Independent*, Mesilla, 28 July 1877.
- 15 Hendricks, *Casads*, 79.
- 16 *Mesilla Valley Independent*, Mesilla, 4 August 1877.
- 17 Hendricks, *Casads*, 145.
- 18 *Mesilla Valley Independent*, Mesilla, 29 December 1877.
- 19 Hendricks, *Casads*, 86.
- 20 Hendricks, *Casads*, 91.

# Young Pat Garrett Photos Found In Louisiana .... Heading West!

By Cal Traylor

Copies of two photos<sup>1</sup> of interest to Pat Garrett buffs and western historians have been in the Garret family for generations. This family is apparently related in some way to the Garrett family to which Pat Garrett belonged. The photos were headed for the trash by the first Garret family, but rescued by the second Garret family. The Smithsonian Museum was queried by Mary Garret but they have no record and recommended the Dona Ana County History Society for assistance.

took them. So my guess is they have been in the family for many years. Unfortunately all the Garrett's are gone now, my dad being the last one to pass 5½ years ago. My mom is the only one alive at 90 years old and this is what she told me.

My dad passed them on to my sister Kathy,<sup>4</sup> and before she passed away, she passed them on to me. That was in May of last year when my sister gave them to me.

My father was born in Memphis, Texas, and died in Vista Calif. His dad James Harvey Garrett was born on March 23rd, 1869 in Elgin, Texas, and died on Nov. 2nd 1951 in Fort Sumner, New Mexico.<sup>5</sup> I will try to find more as it comes my way.

Thanks, Mary

## MARY'S TWO PHOTOS

Cal: To identify the man<sup>6</sup> in the photos, it would be desirable to have the probable time and place where the two Garrett families lived, where the photo might have originated and the journey it made, ultimately coming into Mary Garret's possession. If the date is about 1870, then the date of late January, 1869 could be considered. That is the accepted date when Pat Garrett saddled and departed Louisiana for the Wild West. He supposedly took with him a horse, a gun, and a saddle. These are featured in one of the images from Mary.

It is very important... to tie your family tree to the Pat Garrett family tree, that helps the argument that your photos are of the famous Pat Garrett, the killer of the famous Billy the Kid.. We want primary sources, not odds and ends posted by other people, or from family legend.

## PHOTO SIZE AND PAPER

Cal: The size of the prints is 15"x18." The edges are

**SAME MAN ... SAME DAY AGE 18?**

**OSCAR 18**



Man in corral

Man in suit

Oscar Son of Pat Garrett

The following correspondence from Mary Garret was sent to Marcie Palmer, president Doña Ana County Historical Society. The subject was Pat Garrett:

Mary: My father was Lewis Garret<sup>2</sup> and was given these two photos by a family member. They said they were photos of Pat Garrett as a young man before he became famous for shooting Billy the Kid. I am trying to find out if they actually are of Pat. Attached are the photos that were given to me.<sup>3</sup> Any help would be appreciated. Thank you, Mary Garret<sup>1</sup> Wallace

All I can tell you my father acquired them from a family member who my mom thought was going to throw them away, and my dad

irregular. The paper seems to be four layers, per Tony. He suggests it might be a process called “wet-plate negative.” This was in use c.1853 to 1902.

Very interesting. It appears all photos were taken at the same photo session; the hat, shirt, tie, and his mood; all seem the same. On one photo there seems to be an imprint of the photographer’s name and/or location. If we could recover that data, and if we had a date; that would help. With a little bit of luck there is some kind of writing on the back of one or more of the photos.

## PHYSIQUE OF SUBJECT COMPARED TO PAT GARRETT

### HEIGHT

Cal: Pat Garrett was rather tall, 6’4” when barefooted, per all the literature. In the photo of the man, one must ask, are his feet visible? How much of the man is not in the photo? Using the rifle length, the man holding the rifle has the rifle butt on top of his right foot. That sounds logical, posing in a corral covered with “corral dust” with a clean rifle; there would be a tendency to not put the butt in the dust.

Is the butt of the rifle<sup>7</sup> visible? If we had the full length it would help to compare to the man’s height.<sup>8</sup> Using the Spencer rifle length, this computes the height of the man as 6’4,” identical to Pat Garrett.

The man’s horse height could help as a comparison to compute the subject’s height. However, the horse height is another unknown. Therefore, this method was abandoned.

In the image of the man in the suit, behind him are steps of which the height of each step, risers, may be a constant, a standard rise being 8” per step.<sup>9</sup> This method was abandoned, as there seems no constant in risers.

### MOUSTACHE and HAIR CUT

The young man in the images has no moustache. Pat Garrett’s first photos are known to date from 1880. That was at his wedding to Apolinaria. At that photo session a second photo was made with Pat wearing a necklace. No one seems to know why a necklace. He did have a

moustache. That moustache changed styles through the years, but always it was present even to his death. If these are photos of young Garrett in 1869 as he left Louisiana and his family, then perhaps, soon after leaving home, he demonstrated his manhood and independence by growing a moustache.

### MOLE

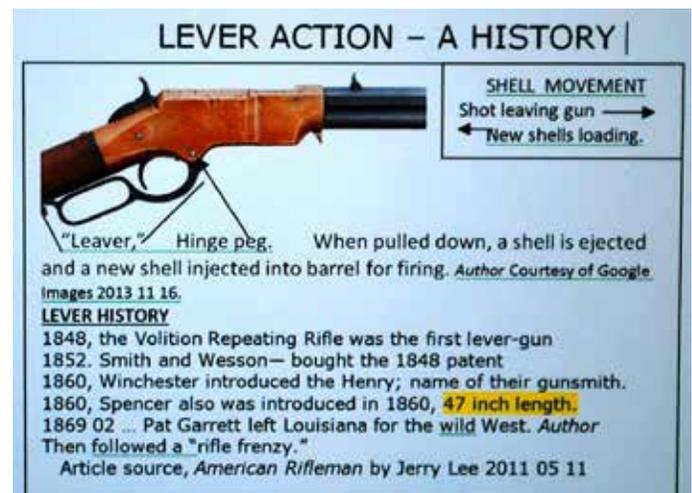
If that is a mole on the young man’s right cheek, and if this is Pat Garrett, this may be the only known evidence Pat Garrett had a mole. There is no other mention of a mole in any description of Pat Garrett. This may not be a mole, but a spot, image flaw or fly. *It has been dismissed as a ... spot. This may disappear when the image is cleaned.*<sup>10</sup>

### SKIN COLOR

Mary: He definitely looks like he has some color to him. I kind of thought that he had some native in him when I saw the photos for the first time. Hope that helps. Per an article about Garrett when he lived in Lancaster, Texas; He had “dark skin.”<sup>11</sup> Jarvis Garrett, son of Pat, had dark skin, more like leather. An earlier guess was dark skin came from his mother, a Mexican.

### GUN A.K.A. RIFLE

There is a rifle in the man’s right hand, hardly visible, therefore it will be hard to identify. Rifles come in different lengths. The Spencer seems the most likely when Garrett left home: the length was 47 inches.<sup>12</sup> This length was used to determine the man’s height.<sup>13</sup>



## CONCLUSION:

Cal: We might give you an eighty percent probability this is Pat Garrett. That was our impression emailed to Mary at the beginning of this adventure. After all our effort, the evidence seems to support that probability, 80% or maybe a bit higher. There is a gap in the title chain, the provenance. How did Mary's ancestors get

these images? Many people were named Pat Garrett, even as their two given names, then and now. There seems no time or place where Mary Garret's family and Pat Garrett's family were acquainted. The height of Man in the photo apparently is 6'4" like Pat. The mystery is not solved, but why on the back of her photo was handwritten the name ... "Pat Garrett?"

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## ENDNOTES

- 1 All photographs in this article are provided by the owner, Mary Garret Wallace. Note her spelling of Garret ... one "t."
- 2 Lewis and others of this Garret/tt line had a stature like Pat Garrett, 6'4" and skinny.
- 3 Three photos ... copies from two photos: One: young Man in suit and tie, wide brim hat. Two: Same Man, same hat, no suit or tie, standing beside horse, rifle muzzle in right hand and rifle butt by right shoe. The rifle merges with trousers so is improbable the rifle model can be identified. Probably both photos were made at the same session. The size of each image is about 10 x10 inches. The paper is about 90 pound, which suggests they were enlargements of an earlier photos and printed in a dark room and developed and dried in a dark room. Three: An enlargement of from Man's face and chest from Man in suit. This shows a spot on Man's right cheek; was that a mole?
- 4 Sister Kathy + sister dead last year + sister Mary who started this enquiry. Mary first contacted the Smithsonian about these photos; they had no information and suggested DACHS. None of the family are historians. == Telephone conversation with author, 2013 11 03, initiated by Kathy.
- 5 These places and times do not match the places and times that Pat Garrett was in the area. Using Google Maps, these places were mapped, a copy is in the author's library.
- 6 "Man" will be used as the name for the person in the image.
- 7 "Gun" technically is used for a long barrel fire arm. Pistol is used for a short barrel fire arm.
- 8 New photographs arrived just before publication, and are published here.
- 9 Stairs, a search for riser height standards -- Ehow, Inspectapedia 7.7" -- *Design Guide to the 1997 Uniform Building Code* - Page 194 4" - 7" -- plus other sources = Conclusion: There is no standard for risers, but they all agree that risers should be identical heights for that job.
- 10 Owner has been encouraged to have the images cleaned then a photo analysis of the images to search for writing not otherwise visible. This is in the field of = photo forensics recover faded writing; search the Internet.
- 12 Compiled by author.
- 13 If the rifle is 47" long, and measures 8.25 inches in the photo, take 47 divided by 8.25, equals 5.69 inches per inch. 5.69 X 13.5 inches (height of man in photo) equals 76.8 inches. Divide that by 12 inches = 6'4.

# Notes on the Origins of Fabián García

By Robert D. Martínez

In New Mexico, “red or green” is as American as “baseball and apple pie.” This phrase refers to chile, of course, the pepper native to New Mexico, beloved and crucial to any authentic New Mexican bowl of beans, *carne adovada*, or any number of delectable dishes. If you have ever enjoyed a chile relleno, then you have Fabián García to thank. One is tempted to romanticize those peppers of emerald and ruby, as being unchangeable through the centuries, ancient and eternal. Yet, the modern day chile known and loved by New Mexicans of all backgrounds did not originate with the ancient indigenous inhabitants of New Mexico. Those proto-New Mexicans, the ancestors of the Pueblo people of today, cultivated maize, squash, and beans. Yet, chile was a foreign cultivar from the south, brought north in the 1600s by Spanish explorers, colonists, and missionaries. Over the centuries it evolved from a small pepper modern-day New Mexicans would hardly recognize into the chile pepper renowned today.

Crucial to that evolution was a Mexican scientist/botanist named Fabián García. On various occasions, Fabián stated he was from Chihuahua and was born on January 20, 1871 or 1872.

Rick Hendricks provides the particulars about García’s past:

Fabián García was born in Chihuahua, Mexico on January 20, 1871, to Ricardo García and Refugio Romero de García. Orphaned of both parents soon after his birth, García moved to the Mimbres Valley in southwestern New Mexico with his paternal grandmother, Jacoba García, when he was two years old. Jacoba found work in the home of George Wilson and his wife in San Lorenzo in Grant County. They later moved to the home of Mr. and Mrs. R. J. White in Georgetown, near Santa Rita. There he received his first schooling. He came to the Mesilla Valley in 1885 with his grandmother who found employ with the Thomas Casad family.<sup>1</sup>

According to Nena Singleton, Fabián García was, born in 1871 in Chihuahua, Mexico, of what he later described as “humble parents,” he became an orphan early. His grandmother, Doña Jacoba, brought him to the Mimbres Valley when he was only two years old. There she found domestic work in the home of Mr. and Mrs. Thompson of San Lorenzo.<sup>2</sup>

It has been commonly accepted that Fabián was orphaned at an early age and was the son of Ricardo García and Refugio García de Romero.

In his book on the Casad family of Mesilla, New Mexico, Hendricks wrote,

Sometime in that fateful year of 1885, the Casads hired a Mexican housekeeper, Doña Jacoba, and she and her young grandson, Fabián García, came to live in Mesilla with the family.<sup>3</sup>

The origins of Jacoba remain a mystery, yet it seems she must have had humble origins. While she is referred to as “doña” in the writings, it is unlikely she would be called by that title and at the same time work as a housekeeper, or servant<sup>4</sup>.

Recently, while researching the Chihuahua ecclesiastical documents for the Sagrario (cathedral) of that city, Fabián García’s baptismal record came to light<sup>5</sup>:

En veinte y tres de enero de mil ochocientos setenta y dos, el prelado don Luis Terrazas, mi teniente en esta Santa Iglesia Parroquia de San Francisco y Nuestra Señora de Regla de Chihuahua, bautizó solemnemente a José Fabián de Jesús, que nació el veinte del corriente, expuesto en la casa de Refugio García. Padrinos: Eugenio García y Guadalupe Ochoa, a quienes advirtió la obligación y parentesco espiritual que han contraído y para que conste lo firmó conmigo.

Juan de la Luz Corral [rubrica]

Luis Terrazas [rubrica]

Translation:

On the twenty third of January eighteen seventy two, the prelate Luis Terrazas, my assistant at this Holy Parochial Church of St. Francis and Our Lady of the Rule of Chihuahua, solemnly baptized José Fabián de Jesús, who was born on the twentieth of the current month, and presented in the house of Refugio García. Godparents: Eugenio García and Guadalupe Ochoa, to whom I explained their parental and spiritual obligation that they have contracted to do and to it be done, he signed with me

Juan de la Luz Corral [rubric]

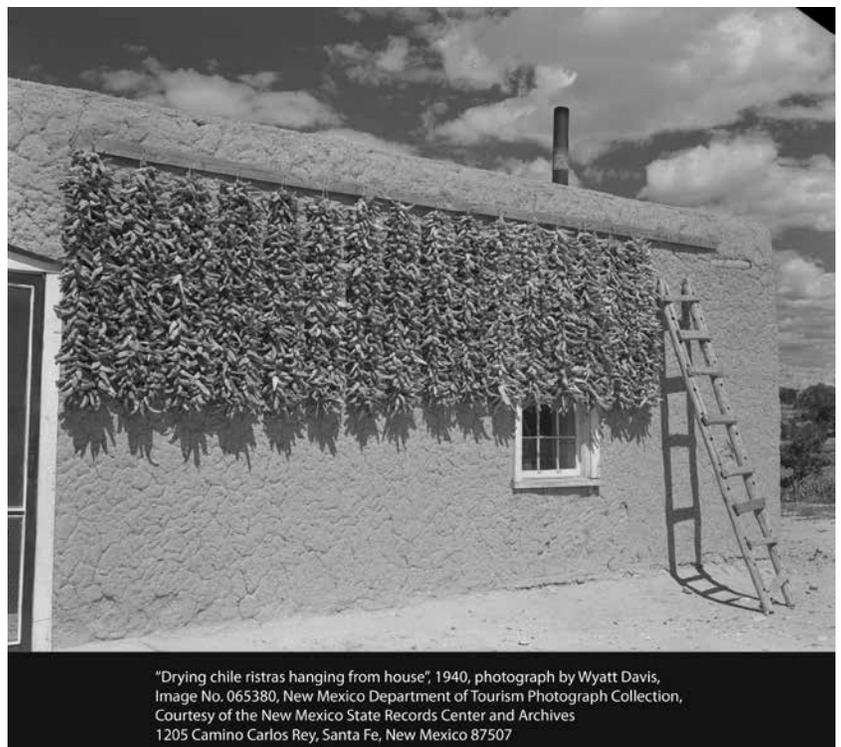
Luis Terrazas [rubric]

This baptismal record provides insight into Fabián's family background and upbringing. To start, he was likely an orphan, or born out of wedlock for having been "expuesto" or placed in the home of Refugio García to be raised and nurtured. Therefore, Fabián's "García" surname comes from his adopted mother, Refugio García. While searching through these records, two things are apparent:

First, "Fabián" is not a very common name. Second, "Fabián" was the favored name given by the priest, Luis Terrazas, for male babies who were born out of wedlock, or orphaned. One issue needing addressing is the year of birth for Fabián. Although Fabián stated he was born in either 1871 or 1872, he always gave 20 January as his birthday. The above record corroborates these statements, as the child in the record was

born 20 January 20 1872.

Given this birthdate and baptismal date, it would seem Fabián and his grandmother made their way north a year or two later, around 1874, settling in southern New Mexico. Jacoba worked first for the Thompson family of San Lorenzo, then the Wilson family of San Lorenzo, and the White family of Georgetown near Santa Rita, before gaining employment with the Casad family of Mesilla. This movement did not deter the planting of a most important seed, a seed that at first glance, might have seemed insignificant, but grew to become the man, the father of New Mexico chile, Fabián García.



"Drying chile ristras hanging from house", 1940, photograph by Wyatt Davis, Image No. 065380, New Mexico Department of Tourism Photograph Collection, Courtesy of the New Mexico State Records Center and Archives 1205 Camino Carlos Rey, Santa Fe, New Mexico 87507

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## ENDNOTES

1. Rick Hendricks "The Chile Kings: Fabián García and Roy Nakayama," in *Sunshine and Shadows in New Mexico's Past: The Statehood Period 1912-Present*, ed. Richard Melzer (Albuquerque, NM: Rio Grande Books, 2010), 419-20.
2. <http://archives.nmsu.edu/rghc/exhibits/garciaexhibit/vena2.htm>
3. Rick Hendricks, *The Casads: A Pioneer Family of the Mesilla Valley* (Los Ranchos, NM: Rio Grande Books, 2012), 103.
4. 1880 U.S. Census, New Mexico, Grant County, San Lorenzo, pg. 387. Jacoba is enumerated as sixty years old, and Faviano as ten years old. Jacoba has "Servt." or "Servant" listed as occupation.
5. Mexico, Chihuahua, Catholic Church Records, 1632-1958, Chihuahua, Sagrario, Bautismos 1863-1884, fol. 82r.

# Here Ends The Dead Man's Journey

By The FAT Boys

**B**ernard Gruber, known as Bernardo or “El Alemán,” meaning “the German,” was a merchant who came up from what is today the state of Sonora in Mexico to trade with the Spaniards and Indians in north-central New Mexico. It is unknown why this German was in New Spain, but it appears he established himself as a man of means, perhaps from trade. There is no record indicating if Gruber arrived in New Mexico with other traders or if he came only with his small entourage of a couple of Indian women and a young Apache boy. Traders brought up, by pack train, wagons or two-wheeled carts called *carretas*, many with items that were not readily available in the Northern provinces and they would trade them often at a great profit. The trips could often prove perilous and took many months to complete. Bernardo Gruber may have previously made several trips to New Mexico and he may have lived to return and prosper had he not made a foolish mistake.

On Christmas morning, 1667, Gruber and a friend attended mass at Nuestra Señora de la Purísima Concepción de Cuarac at Quarai, a Tiwa speaking mission. Perhaps the two were drunk, as it doesn't appear that a rational person would have done what followed. Perhaps as a joke or because of the alcohol, Gruber scribbled some letters and symbols on little pieces of paper. One source states the papers had a cross and the letters “ABNA,” another cross, then the letters “ADNA” and, finally, another cross.<sup>1</sup> He convinced those who were gullible into believing that by swallowing them, they would become invulnerable for twenty four hours. The two men climbed the choir loft and proceeded to whisper to the singers that the little papers would make one invulnerable from any harm for a whole day if they would ingest the little papers. José Nieto, a nineteen year-old Tano Indian raised by Captain José Nieto, took one as an opportunity to impress some friends. Later that same morning, before a gathering of some old Indian men, he repeated what Gruber said about becoming invulnerable, swallowed one of the papers and took an awl and struck his opposite hand and then his wrist with the sharp object. His prank had the sought after effect

on the awed spectators. José then went to the community house, swallowed another little paper and repeated his little prank in front of his family, this time by stabbing his legs. He immediately explained it was all a big joke and he did not believe in the paper's magic. It was clearly not sorcery, but a polished trick. Unfortunately for Gruber, this was during the time of the Mexican Inquisition and, when word got around, the clergy did not like what they heard.

Gruber's friend, who abetted him in the beginning, sobered up and challenged him by drawing his sword to test his belief in the little papers. The German was game and responded by drawing his sword and offering that in this way the matter would be proven. His erstwhile friend declined the counter-challenge.

José Nieto, or possibly his family, reported the incidents to the authorities and Gruber was ordered to remain in the valley pending investigation. The incidents were soon dismissed by most as Gruber claimed the invulnerability claim was only good on the first day of Christmas, which was long past. His charisma may have also had something to do with it. Feeling confident he would be exonerated, Gruber remained in the area and continued to trade.

Fray Juan de Paz, agent of the Holy Office of the Inquisition, did not let the matter pass uncontested, so he ordered Gruber to remain in the area until the matter was resolved. Eventually, at about 10:00 PM on April 29, 1668, important members of the clergy as well as Captain José Nieto and his adopted son arrested Bernardo Gruber at Quarai for sorcery. Gruber, holding a gourd of water in his hand, did not contemplate escaping, as he doubtless felt confident he would triumph in the end. He was then taken to Abó where he was put in a small room guarded by two men. An inventory of his belongings was taken and verified by Fray Juan de Paz. Among his possessions were: two female Apache servants, a fourteen or fifteen year-old Apache boy named Atanacio, ten mules, five mares, three oxen, thirteen stallions, one hundred and five pairs of assorted woolen stockings, fourteen pairs of under stockings, an embroidered pillow, ninety elk skins

(two of them beautifully painted), a tent made of buck skins, two old saddles, one mule bridle, three buckskin bags, seven harnesses with ropes and packsaddle pads, a harquebus, sword, knife, small ax and powder belt. A list of seven names of debtors owing him a total of ninety-two dollars topped off this impressive list.

Gruber remained shackled in Abó for nearly a month before he was transported to a more secure place, the *estancia* of Captain Francisco de Ortega. Normally, one facing an Inquisition trial would deal with his accusers in a reasonable time frame, but severe drought, famine, lack of manpower, and Apache raids delayed taking Gruber to face the Holy Tribunal in Mexico City. Gruber languished in his cell for over two years before plotting his escape. Gruber kept occasional communication with his servant Atanacio, but then increased their surreptitious visits when it became clear escape was the only way out. Fortunately for Gruber, one of his guards was one who was indebted to him. By cajoling the hapless man, the crafty German promised to waive his account if he would abet in his escape.

Since the shackled German prisoner's movement was limited, he concocted a convincing illness. He complained to his captors of pain on his right side and he even refused to eat for three days thus further convincing them that his shackles should be removed. His plan appeared to be working, but the plotting did not go entirely unnoticed. An Indian servant of Captain Ortega observed the short meetings in which supplies were handed to Gruber, but the servant remained silent for the time being. During this time, Gruber and Atanacio made preparations for the escape by loosening the heavy wooden bars of the enclosure.

Around midnight of June 22, 1670, Atanacio saddled two horses and took three others in tow and sneaked past the guard to help Gruber remove the wooden bars. The task proved more difficult than anticipated, but by around three o'clock they were on their way. They rode out as silently as possible and turned south on the Camino Real de Tierra Adentro. They rode for several hours without incident, but before they could react, a rider approached them. He was Francisco Domínguez, a son of a well-to-do man in the area. Fortunately, the Domínguez family was among those who felt Gruber had been treated unfairly, and the lad offered to lend them some fresh horses if they would accompany him to their ranch. Gruber and Atanacio declined as they

deemed it better to put more miles behind them. When an alerted Captain Ortega, who speedily pursued the escapees, rode up to the Domínguez *estancia* to ask for assistance, he was refused when he requested they aid in his pursuit and capture of the fugitives. His request for fresh horses was also turned down.

Gruber and Atanacio rode on and eventually left the river at the well-known campsite of Fray Cristobal. As mentioned above, the previous two years had been very dry and the ninety-mile desert they faced would have been foreboding. Their water supply was soon used up, but they plodded on, hoping to find some in the intermittent pools or *tinajas* (rock catch tanks). They still had no water when they stopped for rest about midway through this desert at Las Peñuelas or Point of Rocks.

Gruber, who may have been in a weakened state from lack of physical activity and a poor diet, sent his accomplice ahead for water. Atanacio may have checked the pools at Perrillo, the closest source, and found them dry. The next and perhaps only other choice was the Rio Grande River near Tonuco, or San Diego Peak, still a long ride away.

The tired lad drank his fill and perhaps even plunged in to refresh himself before he filled up his *jicara* or clay jar, to take back to Gruber. After putting some miles behind him and much to his consternation, the jar broke spilling its precious contents. He didn't have another container, but rode back to the river and resourcefully soaked his saddle blanket, hoping to still have enough of the life-giving fluid to revive his friend. Unfortunately, when Atanacio returned to where he left him, Gruber was gone. His search proved futile and Atanacio decided to go to Socorro to report his story.

It may be surmised that during Atanacio's absence Bernardo Gruber may have reflected on some tall cottonwoods they passed en route to Las Peñuelas and deduced that if there were cottonwoods, there must be water. His assumption was a good one because cottonwood trees generally do grow in areas of surface moisture, but these places are often dry during drought. This seems to be the case as the German's remains were found on July 30, 1670 by a small group of traders. Francisco Betancur, a member of this party and a friend of Gruber, wrote that he found a dead roan horse tied to a tree by a halter and that the scattered remains of a man were nearby. Betancur recognized the clothing as belonging to the German merchant. Eventually the

incident resulted in the area being called the “*jornada del muerto*.” (“the dead man’s journey.”) Today this site is today known as Alemán and is located within site of Spaceport USA. Gruber’s unplanned demise is also responsible for the naming of the dreaded ninety-mile

desert on the Camino Real de Tierra Adentro known as the Jornada del Muerto. Bernardo Gruber’s remains were gathered and taken to El Paso del Norte and buried outside the mission of La Conversion de los Mansos Y Sumas.

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## ENDNOTE

- 1 A knowledgeable person informed this writer that the swallowing of prayers on little pieces of paper may have been an esoteric Jewish practice of the Kabbalah.

# Jefferson Davis's Railroad to the Pacific

By John P. Wilson

In 1880 and 1881, two transcontinental railroads linked New Mexico and Arizona to the rest of the United States. This could have happened twenty years earlier if the U. S. Congress had allowed itself to be swayed by the efforts of one of its own members.

In the late 1850s, an ambitious scheme to link the southern United States with the Pacific Coast by a railroad was floated in the U. S. Senate. Early in 1858, the Senate Select Committee on the Pacific Railroad reported out a bill to authorize the president to contract for the transportation of mail, troops, and other government services by railroad from the Missouri River to San Francisco. At that time there were no railroads between Missouri and California. A few senators raised some questions, but nothing much happened. Looking back, we can see that one senator had something special in mind.

Then in January 1859 a serious debate began. By the middle of the month, senators were complaining that this issue now consumed half of their time. The question of whether the government should even become involved was answered by the timeless justification that a railroad was needed for national defense. California lay separated from the rest of the United States by a largely unsettled area, and any foreign threats remained vague or imaginary.

The desirability of such a railroad was not seriously questioned, but its location immediately became a sensitive issue. Should only a single route be surveyed, or as many as three? The secretary of war in 1859, a Virginia man, had already gone on record that the 32<sup>nd</sup> parallel or desert route from El Paso, Texas, to the Colorado River and southern California, had “very decided advantages” including (in his words) sufficiently abundant water. Other possible locations, usually called the central and northern routes, lay as far north as present-day Wyoming and Montana.

Jefferson Davis, then a prominent senator from Mississippi and a member of the select committee, had served as secretary of war during the government-sponsored Pacific Railroad Surveys in the early-middle 1850s. That monumental study included the best available information for deciding where a railroad might best be

built across the western United States.

Davis was thoroughly familiar with these volumes, but equally so was Senator Henry Wilson from Massachusetts, who favored a central route. In the debate, they quoted at length with respect to a 32<sup>nd</sup> parallel route, cherry-picking their information. The Massachusetts senator cited any number of reports whose authors claimed that western Texas from the Pecos River to El Paso was barren and worthless, and the country beyond as far as San Diego was sterile and barren. Neither a sprig of grass nor a drop of water was to be found in a dry, parched-looking plain, destitute of trees, with almost unendurable heat in the summer months.

Senator Davis viewed the same landscape as a country of easy grades, where good tie-timber and lumber could be obtained from the local mountain ranges; where the arid areas would be made fertile by water from artesian wells (an earlier Davis scheme). He claimed that the longest intervals without permanent water amounted to forty miles or less, and the pace of road-building would be limited mainly by the speed with which ties and rails could be delivered and laid. Little preparation of the natural surface was needed. In an amendment, he asked for an appropriation of \$10 million and ten sections of land per mile to construct a railroad between the states of the Atlantic and the Pacific. He might as well have asked for the moon.

While most of the senators simply sat and listened, Jefferson Davis finally owned up to what everyone else already knew; he favored a 32<sup>nd</sup> parallel route for the railroad. He did not exactly claim that this land flowed with milk and honey, but he warned that the more northern routes should be avoided as sterile and impracticable, and in doing so, he referred to one senator as “My friend from the hyperborean region of Iowa.” Hyperborean? Iowa? Hawkeyes in parkas and mukluks? Perhaps when seen from Mississippi, or warmed by a dose of Southern Comfort.

The senators generally tried to play down any claim that the choice of location was a sectional argument--North vs. South. But the undercurrent was there, and the

Massachusetts senator at one point accused a colleague from Georgia of “proposing to build a southern [rail] road, so that when the South dissolved the Union it would come within the southern confederacy.” He proposed to call the 32<sup>nd</sup> parallel route the “desert and disunion route.”

The Georgia senator had spoken about events that might lead to a separation or secession of southern states from the Union, and in this he was prophetic. There is a chilling message in these speeches from January 1859, in that the senators already realized that the time was not far distant when the Union would be dissolved. Although southern senators might approve of several locations for a Pacific railroad, an appropriation to build a line that lay outside of a southern confederacy and belonged exclusively to the North was unacceptable.

Finally, on January 27<sup>th</sup> the senate voted on a bill to invite proposals for construction of a Pacific railroad along three separate routes. By then the debate had degenerated into a farce, as a senator from California put it, and it was obvious to all that the legislation was dead whether it passed or failed. It did pass, by a vote of thirty-one to twenty, as a version offered by Senator Andrew Johnson of Tennessee, with everyone exhausted

and just wanting this behind them. The bill never made it to the House of Representatives. A similar proposal was revived in February 1861, this time with the princely sum of \$125 million in thirty-year bonds attached, but several southern states had already seceded, and the proposal went nowhere.

Senator Jefferson Davis had been cast as the chief advocate of a southern route. Is it possible that he had something more in mind when he argued that it was necessary for national defense? Less than three years later, one of Davis’s early actions as President of the Confederate States of America was to send several mounted regiments under Brigadier General Henry Hopkins Sibley to gain control of the Southwest and perhaps the country beyond. Had a Pacific railroad been in existence, Sibley’s troops could have ridden the rails into El Paso, Tucson, and even on to Los Angeles or San Diego.

As it was, they rode their horses instead and scarcely probed beyond the Pima Villages in southern Arizona. Perhaps Jeff Davis did gain some small satisfaction in the operation of a Confederate mail line that ran all the way to Los Angeles for a brief time in 1861.

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*Appendix to the Congressional Globe*, 35th Congress 1st Session, page 35

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# Did Jeff Davis Send A Letter?

By John P. Wilson

Some pretty interesting things, not involved with fighting, happened during the Civil War in the Southwest, 1861-1862. The example given here was intended for inclusion in a history of the Pima and Maricopa Indians, after I noticed references to Confederate mail riders crossing their reservation in southern Arizona. My point here, however, is that relevance or the lack of it should not get in the way of a good story.

Most people in the Southwest have some familiarity with the Butterfield Overland Mail (i.e. Overland Mail Co.), which crossed the country from western Missouri to San Francisco, California, passing through southern New Mexico and Arizona. An annual subsidy of \$600,000 from the Post Office Department made this operation possible. The mail and stage operations began in September 1858 and continued until the eve of the Civil War. Congress authorized the Postmaster General to discontinue the Butterfield contract on 2 March 1861.

But it took time to close out this service. The last east-bound stage cleared El Paso, Texas, on 9 March and arrived in California, Missouri (the eastern terminus), on 21 March. Even after this, another stage from the West Coast rolled into Mesilla, New Mexico, in early April, just about the same time that the last mail *from* the East arrived in San Francisco.

The Butterfield line wasn't the only overland mail service between California and the eastern United States. The San Antonio and San Diego Mail Line, which the Post Office also subsidized to the tune of \$149,800 a year, began its twice-a-month run between these two cities more than a year earlier, in July 1857. In 1858 these two lines met at El Paso and continued west along the same route as far as Fort Yuma on the lower Colorado River. Because their routes overlapped between El Paso and Fort Yuma and because at this period the Overland Mail Co. had more political clout, the San Antonio and San Diego Mail Line lost its contract to carry mail between El Paso and Fort Yuma in October 1858. In those days, contractors carried all mail over the postal routes, and the awarding of contracts was very political. John Butterfield was a personal friend of President James Buchanan, and

his postmaster general, Aaron V. Brown, appeared to favor the Butterfield interests.

This left the San Antonio and San Diego company still with its mail subsidy between San Antonio and El Paso and from Fort Yuma to San Diego with the frequency increased to weekly service and the subsidy increased to \$196,448 a year. The contractor evidently continued to carry passengers over the entire route on the same schedule, although it might not always have furnished stagecoaches as transportation. At times, the passengers had to ride mules.

Both lines continued running their stages until the spring of 1861 when, as one historian put it, there was "an air of unreality about the national crisis" (Austerman 1985: 163). Unreality was definitely the case with respect to postal service. On 23 February 1861, Texas ratified its Ordinance of Secession, and a week later the U. S. Postmaster General annulled the Butterfield contract, but soon after this (18 March) the United States awarded George Giddings, the San Antonio and San Diego mail contractor, a *new* contract to link San Antonio and Los Angeles with his coaches. This contract, worth \$175,000 a year, was to run from 1 April 1861 to 30 June 1865.

Acting on his federal contract, Giddings returned to Texas by late March and began to put his new operation in order. Henry Skillman, who had charge of the Western Division and who himself had had a long career as an express rider and stage-line operator, sought to reestablish and stock the old stations during April and May.

The San Antonio and San Diego company began regular stage service from San Antonio to Mesilla by 1 June 1861 and mail from Tucson reached Los Angeles on 20 June. Operational details that have survived are almost nil, but Henry Skillman arrived at Mesilla with the first *California* mail on 10 June, six days from the Pima Villages, which lie south of present-day Phoenix, Arizona (c. 380 miles; not very good time).

The second westbound mail departed from Mesilla on 18 June and by the end of the month newspapers reported that the San Antonio and San Diego line was in "complete running order" with bimonthly service between San Antonio and Los Angeles. By mid-July,

*weekly* mail service from California had commenced. This was short-lived as Robert Doyle, superintendent of the Western Division based in California, managed to send a final mail from San Diego (?) through to Mesilla a week before the invading Confederates captured Fort Fillmore, a few miles south of Mesilla, on 27 July.

This invasion meant that the largest part of the mail route (744 miles of approximately 1457 miles in all) between San Antonio and New Mexico, lay firmly within the Confederate States of America, not to mention that Southern sympathizers largely controlled southern New Mexico and Arizona.

Under Giddings' contract with the federal government, his San Antonio and San Diego Mail Line had enjoyed about a month of revived operation before Congress finally rescinded the contract in July 1861. But did this cancellation interfere with mail service? Not at all. George Giddings had accepted a Confederate Post Office Department contract in June to provide mail service between San Antonio and El Paso, their Route No. 8076. Apparently the concept of conflict of interest had not been invented yet, and our entrepreneur saw no problem with carrying mail for two governments that were at war with one another, over the same route, and accepting payment from both. As a contractor, whose stamps were on the letters was not his concern. In truth, there was not even an issue because as of 1 June 1861, the use of U.S. postage stamps became illegal in the Confederacy, which entered what is called the "stampless period" until the first Confederate postage stamps became available in mid-October 1861.

Then in August 1861 our Mercury of the South signed a new contract with Confederate postal authorities to carry mail from San Antonio to Los Angeles, twice a month, for \$250,000 a year. This allowed his existing operation to continue, although he was then reduced to working for a single government. On 12 August 1861, Henry Skillman rode out of Mesilla with mail for California, escorted by Lieutenant Levi Sutherland of Coopwood's Spy Company (San Elizario Spy Company) and fifteen Confederate troopers. Sometime before 23 August they arrived in Tucson. This was probably the same San Antonio and San Diego mail that rode into Los Angeles the evening of 31 August. The couriers or express riders who carried it beyond Tucson probably had no escort. Skillman himself did not continue past Tucson, as he intended to withdraw the San Antonio

and San Diego stock until Indian affairs had quieted. The out-of-control violence reported by the *Arizona* newspaper for 10 August meant that this might be a very long time.

Although the removal of the mules and other property effectively shut down Giddings's mail line beyond Mesilla, someone made at least one more run to California, in September 1861. A letter from Los Angeles dated 20 September, published in a San Francisco newspaper, said that the last mail from the East had arrived there (Los Angeles) "the week past," and the service had been suspended.

But even this was not the end. Someone using the *nom de plume* "Selden" wrote from Los Angeles on 4 October, saying that a Mr. Reed "of the late SA & SD mail line" left Fort Yuma with some of his employees from Tucson on 24 September, bringing "advices" sent from Tucson on 18 September.

Without naming names, the writer of the 20 September letter (from Los Angeles) indicated that someone had finally caught a whiff of Southern rascality, as they might have termed it, in the air of southern California. The correspondent referred to the revival of the San Antonio and San Diego Mail Line as "the hybrid mail," and he had strong reason to suspect that ... it has been the medium of constant intercourse between traitors here and rebels in Texas and the East. In other words, the mail, conducted at the expense of the Federal Government, belonged to the Southern Confederacy, and was used to forward their designs" (*Daily Alta California*, 29 Sept., 8 Oct. 1861).

The correspondent's suspicions were well taken and only slightly out-of-date. By August he was half-right. When Giddings began his second contract with the Confederacy in August, the mail was *entirely* a Southern operation, no longer a 'hybrid' one. According to Confederate Post Office Department records (now in the Library of Congress), the department officially curtailed its Route No. 8076 by November and listed Giddings as having received \$135,000 of his \$250,000 contract, presumably for six and one-half months of services. Whether the United States paid him through July is unclear (but doubtful).

The Confederate government appointed only two postmasters in far western Texas and the Confederate Territory of Arizona. One was at San Elizario, Texas, and we do not know the person's name. On 25 September

1861, William D. Skillman, a brother of Henry Skillman, was designated postmaster at Mesilla, Doña Ana County, Arizona Territory, the only Confederate postmaster in Arizona or New Mexico.

So, in light of all this, did Jefferson Davis ever send a letter, to California? Unfortunately, we do not know, but he could have done so, anytime through September 1861 by simply mailing it in Richmond. The Confederate Post Office Department would have seen it through, possibly with no more than normal delays. Davis could, for example, have written to Brigadier General Edwin Vose Sumner, commanding the Military Department of California, perhaps along the lines of:

“Dear Ed: Just surrender now and save yourself a lot

of trouble later. Your obed<sup>t</sup> Svt, Jeff Davis.” No reply would have been necessary; the explosion in California would have been audible back in Richmond.

Whether or not Jefferson Davis took advantage of this service, others evidently did use it, paying either on the South’s nickel or (before August) on Uncle Sam’s. Belatedly, someone in Los Angeles got wind that the southern overland mail was a Confederate operation, although the information about the United States government paying for it was a bit out-of-date. The Los Angeles correspondent was close enough to the truth of the situation and when a San Francisco newspaper printed his letter, this window to the south, a “hybrid mail,” was then firmly closed.

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# An Introduction to Mesilla Park History

By Francis Cochran

Mesilla Park is located in Doña Ana County, New Mexico. The influx of Americans that followed General Stephen W. Kearny's conquest of New Mexico in 1848 soon spread to the Mesilla Valley. Mesilla Park has been a strong center of agriculture, education, and community ties since its beginning, around 1848. Mesilla was founded before Las Cruces was in 1849. Many hoped that Mesilla Park would outgrow its boundaries and overtake Las Cruces and become the primary city in Doña Ana. However, Mesilla lost the county seat to Las Cruces in 1881. The first railroad from Santa Fe to El Paso made the Mesilla Park community flourish in 1887. A new brick and stucco train depot was constructed in 1925, which still stands today.<sup>1</sup> The new building is in the Pueblo Revival style with hints of Art Deco and is located on Main Street. The railroad opened a new world of architectural possibilities. When the train made stops in town, it delivered large glass windows, factory styled doors, and metal for roofs. As these new styles arrived, the traditional Territorial Style began to give way to a variety of architectural styles. Due to the arrival of the railroad depot, a business district developed on South Main Street in the late nineteenth century. This business district included places such as the Tashiro family packaging plant and later, the Mission Theatre.

Many of the homes in the community are of adobe construction, have flat roofs, and reflect classic New Mexico styles. Most of the significant structures are residential and were built between 1890 and 1930. The historic district is centered around the Frank O. Papen Center (formerly Mesilla Park Elementary School). It represents a long-standing community that has survived war, economic difficulties, and urban renewal. The district retains its integrity of character, structure, and association.

Since 2012 Mesilla Park community members have worked with students from the Public History Program at New Mexico State University to create a nomination to place the neighborhood on the New Mexico Register of Cultural Properties and National Registers of Historic

Places. A NMSU class on historic preservation (taught by Dr. Jon Hunner of the Department of History at NMSU in the fall of 2013) made the selection of structures and boundaries based on field evaluations, Sanborn maps, photographic records, and archival research. The nomination for the district to be placed on the state and national registers will be based on historic building surveys to be completed over the course of the next year or so. In these surveys, each building will be photographed, researched, and recorded on National Register Survey Forms. The boundaries of the proposed historic district encompass the historic core of Mesilla Park, which has University Avenue on the north, South Main Street on the east, Union Avenue on the south, and Bowman Street on the west.

Mesilla Park also benefitted from many local businessmen who rallied to grow and improve the community. One example is George Bowman and his interest in establishing a college in the heart of Mesilla. Bowman and other landowners pushed for the state legislature to form the college. In 1888 Las Cruces College opened its doors to college-prep and business students in a two-room adobe building.<sup>2</sup> In 1889 the New Mexico legislature authorized the creation of New Mexico College of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts (NMCA&MA) under the Morrill Act. Eventually, the college became New Mexico State University. In 1907 the college hired the well-known architect Henry C. Trost to design a campus plan. "Trost's Spanish Renaissance Revival style represents the largest number of historic buildings on today's campus."<sup>3</sup> The growth of Mesilla Park, from about 1848 to 1965 can be attributed to many factors such as agriculture, mining, railroad connections, World War I and World War II, NMSU, White Sands Missile Range, and the achievement of statehood in 1912.

Because of Bowman's investments with the Rio Grande Land Company, attention was drawn to Mesilla Park and the land that was available. The Rio Grande Land Company made arrangements with the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe Railroad to develop residential areas near the depots in both Las Cruces and Mesilla

Park to bring more people to the area and grow the community.<sup>4</sup> In September 1887 the First Southern New Mexico State Fair was held in Las Cruces. During this festival people came from all around by train, horse, or on foot. The train delivered people to the Las Cruces Depot, which was directly across the street from the fairgrounds. But the Rio Grande Land Company and its investors had a lot at stake during this period because they were building homes on speculation. To get people to visit Mesilla Park to see the available land and homes, the Rio Grande Land Company sponsored a train to take people from the Las Cruces Depot to the Mesilla Park Depot. Upon arriving at the Mesilla Park Depot, visitors were welcomed by a giant sign advertising land and homes for sale. This event brought a lot of attention to Mesilla Park and the amenities the neighborhood had to offer. On 17 September 1887, the *Rio Grande Republic* wrote a review of the fair that was nothing more than another shameless plug for Mesilla Park and the entire Mesilla Valley area.

The rate of growth in Mesilla Park was tremendous in the early 1900s. This was obvious from the number of homes being built and the population of children in the community. The original Mesilla Park Elementary School was a one-room adobe building constructed in 1901, which may have housed around twenty-five students. The rapid growth of the community led the enrollment at the small school to soar to fifty students in a matter of four years.<sup>5</sup> The Reverend Hunter Lewis began to rally the community to help build a larger, nicer school that would be a better fit for the neighborhood. Reverend Lewis believed that Mesilla Park needed a more modern and upscale school that fit the social class of people--mainly professors and their families--who lived in the community. When supplies or necessities were needed, Reverend Lewis wrote to his family and old school companions on the East Coast to send what they could. By doing this, he helped clothe the local college students in attire that was more stylish than that which could be obtained locally. He also took in any students who needed a hot meal. He did not feel that anyone should be left out because of their lack of money when away from home. It was said that, "Mesilla Park school was easily the most exciting place in the village."<sup>6</sup> Reverend Lewis played a large part in the Mesilla Park community from his arrival in 1905 until his death on 13 November 1948.<sup>7</sup> Reverend Lewis was the pastor at St.

James Episcopal Church, which sits east of Mesilla Park. "By 1948, the preacher had become known nationally."<sup>8</sup> Reverend Lewis was an activist for Mesilla Park and seemed to see something in the community that pushed him to want to better it as a whole.

For the four-month term in 1906 Preacher taught at the school in Mesilla Park. "The school was needed,' He wrote back home, 'for Las Cruces is too far away down a rough and rutted road.' As he had begun, so he continued being a teacher as well as a preacher. When he was not actually in the classroom he kept aware of the needs of the fledgling school system.<sup>9</sup>

The reverend used his ties from the East Coast to rally his family and friends to donate anything they could spare to help build the Mesilla Park community. He also walked all over the state of New Mexico to gather donations and spread the word of his church and community. Because of this work he became a well know figure. In 1911 Reverend Lewis raised enough money to build the new St. James Church. Both the original and the 1911 church are still standing. Because of Reverend Lewis's community service and his open-door policy, the Episcopal church became the social center for college students and faculty.

Mesilla Park became a center for public meetings and town gatherings and socials. Whenever an issue arose that involved the Mesilla Valley and Las Cruces, a public meeting was held at Mesilla Park Elementary School, if the venue was available and fit the needs, such as the good-road meetings that took place in 1910 and 1911. These meetings were rallies to fund money to build Highway 1 along most of the old Camino Real that ran north and south across the state. The community of Mesilla Park managed to gather \$3,500 to help fund Highway 1, which was substantial considering they were only paying twenty to fifty cents per acre, depending on its location with respect to the river.<sup>10</sup> Over the years the school hosted many cantinas and plays to raise money for other public interests, such as a library. In 1948 state bonds became a big topic of interest in the Mesilla Valley, and Mesilla Park, more specifically Mesilla Park Elementary School, was the place to go and Vote "Yes" to state bonds.

The Mesilla Valley flourished with a variety of agriculture until the area became ravaged by flooding

and droughts. In the early 1900s, Mesilla Park consisted of a series of farms. In 1903 the Bureau of Reclamation proposed the building of Elephant Butte Dam to manage the water allotment to the area. This new allotment of water allowed farmers to switch from cotton to growing vegetables, pecans, and chiles. The switch from cotton was a relief for many because of a drastic drop in prices in previous years, from about nine cents to four cents a pound. These new crops brought different and varied ethnic and cultural groups to the Mesilla Park area, drawn by the opportunities it had to offer.<sup>11</sup> Acequias that exist today in Mesilla Park date back a hundred years and are a part of the Elephant Butte Irrigation District. In 1909 W.J. Stahmann left the North to move to the Southwest to try his hand at farming. He settled near El Paso and remained there until 1926 when he bought 2,900 acres south of Mesilla and another 1,100 acres in 1932. His pecan empire of 4,000 acres had 150 homes for workers, a store, health clinic, processing plant, and a church. Agriculture went into steep decline during the Great Depression when the price of cotton again dropped to four cents per pound (from the previous price of eight to ten cents per pound), and the government paid farmers to not plant a crop in hopes of raising the cotton prices once again.<sup>12</sup> The ways in which the rise and fall of agriculture in Mesilla effected the student population of Mesilla Park Elementary school requires further study.

John and Mary McFie moved to Mesilla Park in 1884 and continued to grow their family.<sup>13</sup> The McFies were one of the first families to settle in Mesilla Park and became influential in local political and business matters. In 1891 McFie Hall (also known as “Old Main”) opened at NMCA&MA in honor of the McFie’s contributions to the community and university. John McFie was one of the local businessmen, who along with Bowman, helped found the college and acquire the land. McFie was a local lawyer and Supreme Court justice. Upon moving to the New Mexico Territory, he was appointed register of the United States Land Office at Las Cruces and soon after became president of the board of regents of the NMCA&MA. His nephew, Samuel Steel, was the first student to graduate from the college in 1893. Steel never received his diploma, however, because he was murdered the night before graduation in Mesilla Park while delivering milk.

R.W. Goddard became the dean of the Engineering Department in 1920 at NMCA&MA. Goddard lived at

419 College Avenue in Mesilla Park. He was nationally known for his contributions in engineering and advancements in radio technology. Most notably he established New Mexico’s first radio station, KOB, which was one of the largest in the world for a time and is one of the oldest in the United States.

Ira Clark lived on Bowman Avenue in Mesilla Park from the early 1900s until his death in 2002. Clark was a historian at NMSU and is best known for his landmark *Water in New Mexico: A History of Its Management and Use*. In his studies of water, Clark examined acequias, noting that although they were supposed to be community property, they usually ended up under government control. Clark was also the state assistant supervisor of the Emergency Farm Labor Program during World War II. In this capacity he was responsible for determining the appropriate wages for prisoners of war held in New Mexico.

The Fabián García Science Center was originally twenty-three acres of land on Bowman Avenue, which García donated to in 1906 to develop the college’s first experimental station farm. García was the first director and developed chile varieties that are still in use today, such as the Sandia. He also did work on alfalfa, cotton, pecans, turf grass, and onions. He was a professor from 1906 to 1945 and often provided rooms on his farm to house poor Mexican-American students during their time at NMCA&MA.<sup>14</sup>

Adlai Feather was a historian, botanist, linguist, and the first Rhodes Scholar from New Mexico. He lived in a house on the corner of Conway and Bowman, currently referred to as the Minter House because of his daughter’s marriage into the Minter family. In 1916 Feather was the first student to receive a M.A. from the University of New Mexico, which he followed with a PhD from Wadham College, Oxford.<sup>15</sup> After successfully completing his degrees, he became a professor at NMCA&MA from 1924 until 1935 when he left his post and opened a nursery in Mesilla Park.<sup>16</sup>

Henry Bowman lived on the southwest corner of Conway and Bowman Avenue in a brick home built in the late 1800s. Bowman was well known in the Mesilla Valley for many reasons such as donating land to help found the agriculture college, establishing Bowman Bank, being active in the Republican Party, and being a successful businessman. Early land deeds indicate that Bowman either sold or donated the land for the site of

Mesilla Park Elementary School.

Francis E. Lester was the first advisor to the college newspaper and ran a company in Mesilla Park, in which he claimed to have the largest collection of “genuine Indian and Mexican handicraft” in the Southwest. In Mesilla Park Lester was known for securing the land that St. James Church was built on in 1904, at 102 St. James Avenue where the church still stands. On a national level, Lester is known for his books on gardening and climate issues as they relate to gardening. On his two acres of land in Mesilla Park, Lester perfected rose bushes. A nursery in California sells the rose he designed and named the “Francis E. Lester Rose.” Lester was also the college librarian, registrar, and a stenography instructor before he gave it all up to become a gardener.

The Sisters of Our Lady of Charity and the Good Shepard bought land off of Conway once owned by the college president Winfred Garrison and built Madonna High School, a convent, and an orphanage. This property is now used as apartments following extensive renovation.

As the community members and the Public History Program at NMSU have worked on creating a nomination to place Mesilla Park on the state and national registers, they have had to address some of the following issues. To be eligible for inclusion on the National Register, a property must first demonstrate significance as established by the criteria listed under 36 CFR 60.4. Integrity is key for the property to demonstrate its significance. Integrity is the quality of being undivided. For a property to maintain its integrity someone from the time period should be able to still recognize the property.<sup>17</sup> There are seven aspects of integrity as listed on the National Register: integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. Location is defined as “the place where the historic property was constructed or the place where the historic event occurred.”<sup>18</sup> Design is defined as “the combination of elements that create the form, plan, space, structure, and style of a property.” Setting is defined as “the physical environment of the historic property.” Materials are defined as “the physical elements that were combined or deposited during a particular period of time and in a particular pattern or configuration to form a historic property.” Workmanship is defined as “the physical evidence the crafts of a particular culture of people during any given period in history or prehistory.” Feeling is defined as “a property’s expression of the aesthetic or

historic sense of a particular period of time.” Association is defined as “the direct link between an important historic event or person and a historic property.”<sup>19</sup> Each of these aspects is not required to make a property eligible, however a combination of various aspects does define integrity.

According to King, two factors explain integrity: why a property is significant and why it should be preserved.<sup>20</sup> Most archaeological sites are often defined under criteria D. They must provide data that provides information to historical and archaeological research. In these cases it is vital that they have enough intact information left to be studied. But, if a property is nominated under Criteria A, B, or C, it must display more visual integrity in the physical makeup of the property, exhibiting an intact condition representative of its original state of construction.<sup>21</sup> Under these criteria properties must have more evidence of integrity than those under Criteria D so they can fully demonstrate their integrity of significance.

The second factor in explaining integrity is to examine who thinks the historic property is significant. In many cases the “who” can be subjective based on where the site is and what kind of site it is.<sup>22</sup> If the property being nominated is an archaeological site, then, of course, the archaeologist is going to think it is important and deserves to be preserved. Subjectivity does not necessarily mean less significance; conversely, it means that those who make the decisions regarding eligibility must take into consideration where the property is located and who it is significant to and why it is significant to those people.<sup>23</sup> Each property deserves a fair evaluation of its significance and quality of integrity, making the nomination procedures and process a valuable tool.

Mesilla Park retains its integrity of location, craftsmanship, setting, materials, feeling, and association. It can even be argued that Mesilla Park as a district embodies significance under criteria A, B, and C. The neighborhood demonstrates significance as a social hub of the Southwest. Mesilla Park was ahead of its time in many ways, such as the college, railroad stations, and architecture. Under criteria B, there were many people who made significant contributions to New Mexico and national history such as Francis Lester, Fabián García, Henry Bowman, Reverend Hunter Lewis, Adlai Feather, and Ira Clark. All of these men made significant strides in changing not only Mesilla Park but also the Southwest, in

the late nineteenth century and early twentieth centuries. Criteria C has to do with architecture, something Mesilla Park is definitely not lacking. The community has many examples of the wide variety of styles found in the Southwest and New Mexico. The Bowman house and Mesilla Park Elementary School are excellent examples of the changing trends of architecture. Both structures

are brick, an uncommon construction material during this period. Henry C. Trost designed Mesilla Park Elementary School, making it the work of a master architect. The combination of these elements makes Mesilla Park a strong candidate for nomination for the New Mexico Register of Cultural Properties and the National Register of Historic Places.

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## ENDNOTES

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# DOÑA ANA COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## In Memoriam

### CHARLOTTE “SHAN/SHA’NN” ANN NICHOLS

Charlotte “Shan/Shan’nn” Ann Nichols, seventy-four, passed away on 21 April 2013. Nichols was a lifetime member of the Doña Ana County Historical Society. In 2001 she was honored with the historical society’s Heritage Award for her work as an artist designing and creating ceramic tiles commemorating historic events in Las Cruces.

Nichols was deeply interested in the history and culture of the Las Cruces area. With the help of Ella Banegas Curry, she wrote a book about local history, *Our Heritage, Our People*. She also worked with historian Chuck Miles on tile historical maps featured at Las Cruces City Hall.

The Las Cruces Sun-News reported that for Nichols, “Preserving and recording events of the past were a special interest. ‘I do it for my children and grandchild,’ she said. ‘They are what it’s all about...to leave things for them in better shape than we found them--especially during times when our history as a city is fairly new and much has already been lost.’”

Nichols was born in Greenville, Mississippi, to Letisha “Tish” and Victor “Stedy” Stedronsky in 1938. The family moved to Las Cruces in 1949. She graduated from Union/Las Cruces High School in 1956 and then Hotel Dieu School of Nursing in El Paso.

She worked in several hospitals, doctors’ offices, and the New Mexico State Health Department. She was also the first nurse employed at the Hanes factory in Mesilla Park. In 1996 Nichols obtained a medical patent in 1996 titled, “Apparatus and Method of Inserting Blood Vessel Catheters Without Blood Loss.”

As an artist, Nichols began by offering her unique tiles at her craft booth at the Las Cruces Farmer’s Market. As recognition of her creations grew, she opened “Shan’nn Gifts and Custom Tiles” on North Main Street in 1974.

### DR. GERALD THOMAS

When Dr. Gerald Thomas died on 31 July 2013 at the age of ninety-four, the community lost a giant and the Doña Ana County Historical Society lost a longtime, generous supporter. Thomas’s unassuming and gentle leadership marked his encounters with groups and individuals throughout the region during his decades in Las Cruces.

Thomas was born and raised on a ranch in Idaho. He was working for the U. S. Forest Service when World War II started. After Pearl Harbor he hitchhiked to California and joined the Navy.



Dr. Gerald Thomas

Thomas became a pilot in Torpedo Squadron 4 during the war. He saw action in both the Atlantic and Pacific Theaters while serving on three different aircraft carriers. He crash-landed on the USS Ranger after his plane was hit by German antiaircraft fire over Norway.

He was aboard the USS Essex when a kamikaze pilot crashed into the carrier. In another incident, the destroyer USS The Sullivans rescued Thomas from a rubber boat after a splash down in the South China Sea following a strike on Japanese targets on Hainan, China. For his bravery and valor, he was awarded three distinguished Flying Crosses, two Air Medals, two Presidential Unit Citations and combat ribbons in both the Atlantic and Pacific Theaters.

His book, *Torpedo Squadron Four, A Cockpit View of World War II*, chronicles his war years.

After WWII, Thomas took leave from the Soil Con-

servation Service to go to graduate school at Texas A & M under the GI Bill. He has held teaching & research positions at Texas A & M, and in 1958 he was appointed Dean of Agriculture at Texas Tech.

Dr. Thomas was appointed President of New Mexico State University in 1970. He served fourteen years as president of NMSU and was involved in both state and national affairs. During his time at the university he helped officials develop the New Mexico Farm &

Ranch Heritage Museum in Las Cruces. Because of his efforts, he is considered a co-founder of the museum.

Thomas is the author or coauthor of numerous books and more than two hundred other publications. In 2012 he published *A Winding Road To The Land of Enchantment*, a memoir edited by his son David.

In 1984 NMSU named a million-dollar chair in his honor and in 1988 designated the Agriculture and Home Economics Building as Gerald Thomas Hall.

## Book Reviews

***Hard Country*** by Michael McGarrity. Dutton Adult, 2012, 624 pages. \$28.95. Now also available in paperback and as an ebook.

This is a historical novel created by Michael McGarrity to provide a backstory for his popular police detective series starring Kevin Kerney. According to the author, the book is the first of a trilogy to establish the Kerney family in New Mexico and flesh out several generations up to Kevin. The years from 1875 through the end of World War I are covered in *Hard Country*.

The author is a former deputy sheriff from Santa Fe and started the Kevin Kerney books in 1996 with Tularosa. In this book Kevin Kerney investigates a murder on White Sands Missile Range and the related discovery of a fabulous stash of antiquities. More than likely the idea was suggested to him by the Victorio Peak legend. Over the span of many books, Kerney has bounced around New Mexico solving crimes.

In *Hard Country*, we learn Kerney is descended from an Irish Civil War veteran named John Kerney. He moved to New Mexico's Tularosa Basin from Texas after his wife died giving birth to their son Patrick. What follows is the development of this fictional family blended into a stew of local historical personalities and events.

The Kerneys mix with real people like Billy the Kid, Captain Henry Carroll, Guadalupe Ascarate, Albert Fountain, Oliver Lee, Pat Garrett and Eugene Manlove Rhodes. They also actively participate in some of our local historical events. For instance, in 1880, John Kerney scouts Chief Victorio's campsite in Hembrillo Basin in the San Andres Mountains for the Army. He and his friends then fight beside the buffalo soldiers on 6 and 7 April as they battle the Apaches.

McGarrity goes so far as to place much of the cavalry's success on Kerney's shoulders. When the two companies of soldiers ride into Hembrillo and are attacked, Capt. Carroll is wounded right away and Kerney "led the soldiers at a gallop to a rocky ridge near the basin floor." He also leads an effort to get water for the thirsty soldiers. In another section, Kerney's partner Cal Doran is hired by Dona Ana County to look into

the murder of Albert and Henry Fountain – before Pat Garrett was hired as sheriff. Doran spends a great many pages chasing red herrings around southern New Mexico, narrowing the suspects to Oliver Lee, Jim Gililland and Bill McNew.

In addition, local residents will find the local geography sounding very familiar with real place names liberally used. However, much of the actual landscape is fictional. The Kerney ranch is placed into a mostly imaginary San Andres Mountains. I've been all through them and most of the descriptions don't match real places. Of course, this is to be expected since the mountains are on the missile range and McGarrity didn't have access to them.

Most will enjoy the mingling of the real and the fictional and probably won't know which is which. I always found it enjoyable to drive through Navajo country and see the places written about by Tony Hillerman. You get the same connections here. Other readers, with more knowledge of the facts, may object to the dialog and action imposed on some of the 'real' people.

In the end the book has a bit of an identity crisis. On the one hand it tries to incorporate much of the significant history of our area. Some may find this march through the historical details a bit tedious. Also, McGarrity's use of our history creates a rather broad sweep of the landscape that, in turn, makes it difficult to stay focused on a nice, tight cohesive plot people appreciate in his detective stories. Some readers might find themselves wandering as the narrative does the same thing.

Jim Eckles  
Las Cruces, NM

***Gold-Mining Boomtown: People of White Oaks, Lincoln County, New Mexico Territory*** by Roberta Key Haldane. Norman: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 2012. ISBN 978-0-87062-410-0. xii and 331 pages, illustrations, facsimiles, maps, bibliographical references, index. \$45.00 hardcover

The image of the frontier mining town frequented by outlaws and prospectors pervades the popular

imagination of the Old West, and White Oaks would seem to fit this mold. But the town was home to more than just gunslingers and gold seekers; a diverse cast of characters helped build the settlement from a mining camp into a bustling village. In her book *Gold-Mining Boomtown*, Roberta Key Haldane examines the lives of individuals and families that once gave life the boomtown-turned-ghost-town of White Oaks, New Mexico, during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Located in Lincoln County, White Oaks is best known for its association with Billy the Kid, Pat Garrett, and others involved in the Lincoln County War. Haldane's goal is to expand the scope of study to highlight the more ordinary people that made up the "boom-to-bust life" of the town from the discovery of gold in 1879 through its general decline after the El Paso and Northeastern Railroad bypassed the town in 1899. In *Gold-Mining Boomtown*, she examines the lives of prominent individuals such as Susan McSween Barber—known as the Cattle Queen of New Mexico—and the state's first elected governor William Calhoun McDonald, but also gives space to prospectors, mothers, bankers, merchants, and even one Samoan princess. Her profiles show that White Oaks' settlers came from a variety of backgrounds and professions, and encompassed a racially and ethnically diverse community. Though some residents came hoping to strike it rich in the mines, others arrived in White Oaks after years of adventure. Both John Lee, a retired sea captain, and Marcus Whiteman, a Russian Jewish shop owner, ended up in New Mexico after years of sailing the globe and raised large families in the region. Little is known about James W. Bell, the deputy sheriff killed by Billy the Kid in his escape from the Lincoln jail in 1881, who became more famous for the manner of his death than the content of his life. Haldane endeavors to depict each individual with a high level of detail, which enriches many of their stories and give the reader a greater understanding of life in a small New Mexican town.

However, the same level of detail Haldane employs to bring to life the people of White Oaks can become cumbersome and bog down the book's broader narrative. In an effort to document so many people as fully as possible, several of the narratives read like a list of unrelated anecdotes about the subject. The chapters vary in length, with some biographies going into great depth while others skim the surface. This is not surpris-

ing given her reliance on family history, which can be spotty, but does lead to a somewhat uneven read, with many profiles seeming more anecdotal or laudatory than strictly historical. Haldane also neglects to connect many of her subjects to each other as well as events and trends beyond Lincoln County. Her work is a thorough portrait of White Oaks and the individuals who moved through New Mexico Territory during the late nineteenth century, but would benefit from tying the rise and fall of this boomtown to the national narrative of social and economic unrest accompanying rapid industrialization and technological advancement.

Despite these challenges, Haldane's work provides a valuable contribution to the knowledge of the diverse cast of characters that lived—and died—in White Oaks and Lincoln County. *Gold-Mining Boomtown* succeeds as a detailed biographical history of this small town and will prove invaluable to those studying the area. She widens her scope from that of a few prominent individuals to a large cast of ordinary working men and women, with each person contributing to White Oaks' journey from boom to bust.

Caitlin Wells

Archivist for the Rio Grande Historical Collections  
University Library  
New Mexico State University

***J. Robert Oppenheimer, The Cold War and the Atomic West*** by Jon Hunner: Volume 24 in The Oklahoma Western Biographies. University of Oklahoma Press, Norman, 2009. ISBN 978-0-9061-4046-9. 248 pages, ill., 28 photographs, index and Bibliographic Essay.

Dr. Jon Hunner is no stranger to the Dona Ana County Historical Society. He is a regular guest speaker, and is the Chair of our Scholarship Committee. He also received the Hall of Fame Award in 2008 for preserving the history and heritage of the Mesilla Valley and surrounding areas. He will be the new Vice President for 2014-2015.

As a researcher and librarian, I like to understand the author and motivation for writing a book. His biography is as interesting as the book he has written. Although he was born in Washington, D. C., he is a New Mexican in heart and soul. History is his love, and he is Director of the Public History Program at New Mexico

State University, his accomplishments are too numerous to mention. A look at his resume on publications, presentations, workshops, grants, contracts, projects, committee memberships, and awards will give you the real magnitude of his diversity.

The motivation for this book is apparent from the very beginning. Jon Hunner grew up in a military family, as his father, through the U. S. Air force, was connected to nuclear weapons. He remembers a picture of the Trinity detonation hanging in the living room. His grandfather was also in the military. There is a collection of their photographs at Dr. Evans Davies' Institute of Historical Survey Foundation (IHSF).

The documentation was very thorough. There are 28 illustrations, covering family and professional photos. A contents page is provided that will let you go to the parts you're most interested in, as well as six pages of index, but most useful for me was the bibliographic essay. Five years of research went into this project, part of it from his previous book in 2004 "*Inventing Los Alamos: The Growth of an Atomic Community*." Besides every archive, museum, institute for research, and university special collections in New Mexico, he found his biggest treasure in our local Coas Book Store: the original transcript of the security hearing. His out of state research took him to the Library of Congress Manuscript Division and Atomic Heritage Foundation in Washington, D. C.; American Institute of Physics and National Archives both at College Park, Maryland; Truman Presidential Library in Kansas City, Missouri, and Eisenhower Presidential Library in Abilene, Kansas.

Lutisha Piland, MLIS, Retired Librarian  
Library of Congress  
American Embassy, Cairo, Egypt

***La Posta: From the Founding of Mesilla to Corn Exchange Hotel to Billy the Kid Museum to Famous Landmark*** by David G. Thomas. Las Cruces, NM: Doc45 Publishing, 2013. ISBN 978-0-9828709-3-8. 113 pages, index, 50 photos, 4 maps, \$11.95 paper, \$6.99 ebook.

For most of the last quarter of a century, my family and I have eaten at La Posta restaurant in Mesilla. It is

one of the most famous eateries in the United States, and the food is unfailingly delicious, the wait staff is friendly and efficient, and the ambience is quaintly appealing. On numerous occasions we have read the "history" of the building that houses the restaurant. I do not propose to reveal all the secrets revealed in David Thomas's new book, but I will say that if you really want to know the facts about La Posta and the town of Mesilla, you will want to read this book.

Through years of meticulous research, combing through Doña Ana County deed records and historic documents, poring over historic maps, and making overlays on modern maps, the author has produced the definitive history of the property in the heart of Mesilla, including the La Posta block located southeast of the plaza. Reconstructing the history of the properties around the plaza revealed, among many other things, that the church of San Albino has always occupied the same block. This finding refutes what had almost become received wisdom that the church had originally been located on the south side of the plaza.

Although the various incarnations of the structure where La Posta is located is the focus of this book, the author examines the founding of Mesilla in minute detail. Thomas persuasively argues that rather than beginning as a Mexican village with Spanish street names, Mesilla was established as an American town with a Main Street. There is no explanation for how the town got its Mexican makeover. Perhaps that is a topic for a future study.

There are very few miscues. The Mexican border commissioner was Pedro García Conde (rather than Condé). I only note this error because Thomas paid considerable attention to the activities of the Bartlett-García Conde commission. St. Genevieve was razed in 1967 rather than in the 1970s, as the author has it. This is worth mentioning only because its destruction is often wrongfully conflated with the wholesale removal of so many historic structure in Las Cruces during the "urban renewal" of the 1970s.

This book makes a significant contribution to the historiography of the Mesilla Valley. I hope to see on sale at La Posta the next time I dine there.

*Rick Hendricks*  
*New Mexico State Historian*