



NEWSLETTER

February 2018

Doña Ana County Historical Society

Its True - DACHS Now Owns A Cemetery

For those of you who may have missed the news stories in December, your historical society has indeed purchased an abandoned cemetery simply for the payment of back taxes. The little cemetery, only .6 of an acre, is in Old Picacho Village. The cost was \$500.

According to our historian Sally Kading, the cemetery property belonged to the Estate of Isaac Chavez but had been unattended and delinquent on property taxes for years. In fact, the cemetery was turned over to the State of New Mexico for processing because of the back taxes.

San Albino and St. Genevieve church records show the earliest burials there were in the 1860's. She can document 15 burials there. Today only two headstones remain. They belong to the wife and child of Hichiro "Jose" Matsuba, a Japanese born laborer who came into the United States through Juarez bringing

his Hispanic wife with him. Also, there are a number of wooden stumps onsite that may be the remains of old crosses that marked some of

the graves. Because of those possible artifacts, the property is in a sensitive state.

In the fall of 2016 Sally proposed the DACHS list the cemetery as a "Historic Endangered Property." At the January 2017 Awards Luncheon we did recognize it in an attempt to bring attention to its plight as people were using the edges as a dumpsite and it was overgrown with weeds.

In April 2017, Sally was following up on the cemetery to see how the DACHS might help preserve and protect it. She priced fencing and some

sort of main headstone that could display the names of all the graves. She told the board of directors that it might be done for \$2,000. Jon expressed concern over spending that kind of money when we didn't understand the status of the cemetery, especially if the owner decided to reclaim it.

Our treasurer Gerry

Veara got into the act and called the New Mexico Department of Revenue where the

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After the DACHS Board of Directors approved bidding on the Picacho Cemetery, these three board members made it happen. From the left: Sally Kading, Gerry Veara and Susan Krueger. The photo was taken in the county's chambers after our successful bid on Dec. 15, 2017.

Help From The State — CONTINUED FROM PAGE ONE

property was being processed. Gerry was lucky and made contact with Karl Apodaca, an attorney for the department. Karl is a native of Las Cruces and knew where the cemetery was located.

In conversations, Karl took time to explain the process. Normally, such a small tract, especially a cemetery that must remain a cemetery, wouldn't be put up for auction but it could be if someone was interested. The cost estimate was about \$700 to settle the account.



Gerry Veara's photo shows the two remaining grave markers. The little one is in the grass on the left.

Gerry presented this information at the May Board of Directors meeting. It was immediately suggested that the DACHS could pay the back taxes, acquire the property, get some volunteers to clean it up and protect it for the community. The idea passed the board unanimously.

We went the extra mile with Sally contracting both the Chavez family, as owner, and the DiMatteo family, as the family of the most recent burials. She explained our intent and asked if they were okay with our action. Both said yes.

Since then Gerry, Sally and Susan Krueger, our past president, have worked the details with the state, village residents and family members. The auction was held at the Dona Ana County complex on Dec. 15. Karl Apodaca was there to offer us advice.

It was an interesting process as about 28 properties were initially listed for public auction. By the time it started there were only six of seven left.

Apparently the threat of losing their property spurred many to pay the back taxes. Only three of the remaining properties were actually bid on and DACHS was the only bidder for the cemetery. Its price was set at a minimum of \$500. It was over in 60 seconds.

There is some paperwork to be accomplished yet but Gerry says the deed has already come in from Santa Fe and has been filed with Dona Ana County. Also, he has requested the property be removed from the tax roles by the County Assessor.

Finally, Susan indicates The Chavez family has two years to reclaim the property if they reimburse the Society for the back taxes. While possible, it is unlikely this will happen. However, the Society will not own the property until the two years have passed.

Now it is time to get busy. But busy doing what? None of us has ever owned a cemetery or tried anything like this before. We know we will have a sit down with Leslie Bergloff, a new board member, who has some expertise in preserving historic cemeteries.

We know we will need a restoration plan and will look for help from our membership and the community at large. We need ideas and input on what needs to be done and we absolutely know we will need willing hands and strong backs to clean up the small plot.

If you are interested in any part of this process, please contact Sally at: slkading@comcast.net or Susan at: skrueger575@msn.com

You can also talk to them at the next public meeting on Feb. 15 at Good Sam. See ya then.



Gerry's closeup of the larger tombstone.

New Historic Properties Head To Speak Next

Dr. Patrick Moore, hired as New Mexico's Director of the Historic Sites Division within Cultural Affairs in Sept. 2016, will speak at the DACHS membership meeting on Thursday, Feb. 15. He will provide insight into the state's many historic properties in southern New Mexico. We'll probably learn things about places in our own backyard that we never knew before.

Moore grew up in Los Alamos and holds BA degrees in History and Political Science, a MA in History from New Mexico State University, and a Ph.D. in History from Arizona State University. He is actually returning to New Mexico because he was hired away from the University of West Florida where he was

the Public History Program Director and Associate Professor.



At UWF Dr. Moore, with colleagues, developed a highly innovative technology application, Next Exit History™, which is a GPS-based system that provides smartphone users with on-site historic information. Also, For the past 10 years Dr. Moore has served as an officer (in numerous roles) of the Executive Committee of the National Council on Public History, and he just began another two-year term, now as Past President.

As always, the presentation will begin at 7 p.m. on the 15th in the Good Sam auditorium at

3011 Buena Vida Circle in Las Cruces.

DACHS Notes

If you missed the Awards Luncheon on Jan. 27, this is our roster for the board of directors and our officers for 2018:

President: Dennis Daily

Vice President: Dr. Jon Hunner

Secretary: Jim Eckles

Treasurer: Gerry Veara

Historian: Sally Kading

Past President: Dr. Susan Krueger

At-Large Board Members

Leslie Bergloff, Garland Courts, Luis Rios,

C. W. "Buddy" Ritter, Leah Tookey & Sara Wagner

Committees

Website/Publicity/Newsletter/Review: Jim Eckles

Education/Scholarships: Dr. Jon Hunner

Book Sales: Carl Eichstaedt

Liaison to City Museums: Garland Courts

Doyle and Lutisha Piland are now happily settled in Simi Valley, Calif. They avoided the big fires and want to wish all their friends a happy new year.

The Awards Luncheon Program has been posted on the DACHS website. Also, the *Southern New Mexico Historical Review* is now on line as well. These are PDFs and can be read on line or downloaded to be read or printed.

One more time. Dues are due for 2018. Dues have become really important the past couple of years as they are our main source of revenue. Our expenses have been climbing, especially for the printing of the *Review*, luncheon program and monthly newsletter. If we want to continue these printed products, we need everyone's dues.

We are receiving information about the upcoming New Mexico History Conference. This year we have the advantage of it being in our own backyard - in Alamogordo April 19-21. The featured speaker will be New Mexico mystery author Michael McGarrity. He speaks on April 19 at 5:30 p.m. There will be a reception at the New Mexico Museum of Space History after his talk. The Alamogordo Library is holding a pre-conference event on the 19th from 1 to 3 p.m. It will feature a Eugene Manlove Rhodes exhibit.



Deb Dennis, Executive Director of Human Systems Research, is flanked by Jon Hunner, DACHS vice-president, and Dennis Daily, DACHS president, at the Jan. 27 DACHS Awards Luncheon. Deb was inducted into the DACHS Hall of Fame for her tireless efforts on behalf of the Amador Hotel. She will be our speaker at the March 15 membership meeting at Good Sam.

2018 Board of Directors

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