

NEWSLETTER

May 2020

**NO MAY MEETING
HAVE A SAFE SUMMER**

Doña Ana County Historical Society

There Is Undiscovered Treasure In Any Archive

By Dennis Daily
President, DACHS

One of the great pleasures of working in an archive is discovering hidden treasures buried deep within the collections and bringing them to light for the education and enjoyment of our users. The resources in the Archives and Special Collections (ASC) are vast and contain millions of such treasures. They are like so many trapped genies, waiting for the right person to come along, rub the lamp, and bring them back into the light of the world. Our users often are the ones who bring the genies forth, finding those hidden gems during the course of their research. It's not uncommon for a researcher, or one of our staff members, to be the first person to lay eyes on a document since it was first created. That's a thrill!

One recent discovery came in the papers of a former nuclear chemist with Los Alamos National Laboratories. Luther "Luke" Lyon retired from that job, where he worked to develop nuclear-powered spaceships, in 1973 then turned his attention to his true passion – social and ceremonial dance traditions, particularly those of New Mexico's Native American populations. For the next 15 years of his life, until his death in 1988, Lyon traveled around the Southwest, especially New Mexico, studying and researching dance ethnology.

The collection he bequeathed to the NMSU Library contains 52 boxes of his research files, detailed

field notes, original manuscript drafts, published articles, speeches, photographs and audiovisual materials. Most relate to New Mexico Native American dance, but Lyon also was interested in comparing these traditions to ritual folk dance in England.

When our volunteer Dr. Terry Reynolds, herself an anthropologist well versed in New Mexico's Native American cultures, processed the collection, she was excited to discover dozens of Lyon's original colored drawings of New Mexico indigenous dance costumes and decoration. Lyon based his drawings on first-hand observations at public social dances and ceremonies around the region. Untrained as an artist, Lyon's drawings are simple and direct, seemingly created with a purely documentary intent. It appears Lyon created his drawings as an extension of his field notes, and not for a consciously artistic purpose.

Similarly, it appears Lyon did not have commercial aspirations for his drawings, beyond publishing them along with his research articles on folk dance. Dr. Reynolds found the drawings within Lyon's research file folders, which he had arranged by linguistic group, then by pueblo name or tribe. Lyon gave no special protection or care to the drawings, all on 8.5×11-inch plain paper, indicating he may not have regarded them as objects any more precious than his research notes, copies of articles,



Koshare clown, Santa Ana Pueblo, July 26, 1975.

See Luke Lyon Images, page 2

correspondence or photographs. The drawings depict most of New Mexico's pueblos and tribes.

Although the drawings may seem objective, because of their direct documentary style, we cannot forget that Lyon was a cultural outsider to the communities he documented (including the English folk dance groups he studied). He brought his own personal history and cultural outlook to his work. Representation of cultural "others" can be highly problematic, particularly when there is a power differential between the person creating the representation and the group represented (as was the case here). Still, the strength of Lyon's drawings is that he consciously seems to have avoided interpretation and stereotypical tropes.

If you are interested in Luke Lyon's New Mexico ceremonial dance research, you might want to take some time to review the finding aid for his collection, located on the Rocky Mountain Online

Archive. The original materials are available for study and use in the Caroline E. Stras Research Room, NMSU Branson Library.



From Lyon's notes, "San Ildefonso harvest dance, Sept. 10, 1972. South-side plaza. On the right are two Kossa at the sacred stones. On the left was the dance leader, perhaps a Kwerana, seen on August 26, 1973."

Oral Histories From Our Local Pioneers Await Your Help

One of the tools used to gather first-hand accounts of the past is the oral history interview. Oral history is one of the oldest methods of historical inquiry, predating the written word. There is no better method for gathering information about how people experienced the past and how they felt affected by historical events. Some of the details of history would be lost if not captured from the memories of those who have lived through it.

The NMSU Library Archives has more than 2,000 oral history interviews in its collections, which offer unique and often intimate views into our region's past. Nearly all of these interviews are recordings made on magnetic audio tape: 1/4-inch reel-to-reel tape and audiocassettes. The earliest date from the late 1950s and probe the memories of pioneers who came to Dona Ana County and southern New Mexico in the late 19th century! It is thrilling to hear the voices of those old timers recalling their encounters with some of the legendary figures of our area.

Providing good access to oral history has always been a challenge for archives and libraries. At the NMSU Archives, the audio recordings were not al-

ways transcribed and a comprehensive catalog of the materials has never been created. While the department has lists of all the oral histories, with the names of the participants and dates, most of the interviews are not searchable by subject matter.

In an attempt to change this situation, and greatly increase the collection's value to researchers, the Archives is digitizing the content of the old analog recordings, creating detailed descriptions of the interviews, and transcribing interviews. However, these are extremely time-consuming activities. As a result, the department is looking for volunteers who would like to help out.

If you are interested in listening to these voices from the past, learning about our region's history from those who lived it, and making the information more accessible to everyone, then consider volunteering to help out. All of the work can be done from your home.

To learn more about the NMSU oral history collections and how you can help open them up to the world, contact Dennis Daily, Archives department head, at ddaily@nmsu.edu.

Las Cruces Country Club Clubhouse To Be Saved

We are happy to report that the developer responsible for the construction project on the old Las Cruces Country Club acreage has agreed to save the Trost and Trost designed clubhouse. In an email to DACHS member Buddy Ritter, Troy Ainsworth, the Las Cruces Historic Preservation Specialist, wrote, “developers have assured the Mayor they would retain the Las Cruces Country Club building. While there is still a lot of work to do done, we are getting there one good step at a time.”

If you recall, we first brought this to the membership’s attention last fall. We joined many other organizations and individuals calling for the original building to be saved and restored. To all of you who followed up with messages of your own to the city’s leadership, THANK YOU.

Troy said the developer will go ahead and demolish the building’s additions and old swimming pool with its bathhouse. The building will be boarded up and protected awaiting further development.

Volunteers Needed To Help On DACHS Awards Committee

For the past few years, the DACHS Awards Committee has simply defaulted to the board of directors. The bylaws call for this committee to cast a look around the community to suggest people and places for our annual awards. The board then votes on the nominations. The ceremony for the presentation of awards is held at our annual banquet.

To gain a different perspective on the process,

we are seeking a few DACHS volunteers to help in the search for worthy awardees. This is not a demanding role and can be done without actual meetings - emails and phone calls to discuss nominees is all that is required.

If you would like to help, please contact Susan Krueger at: skrueger575@msn.com or at 575-640-4266.

Articles Being Sought For January 2021 Historical Review

The Dona Ana County Historical Society is looking for original articles concerning Southern New Mexico history for its next annual Review (Volume XXVIII, January 2021). Biography, local and family histories, oral history, student papers and articles focusing on the history of the Southwest and Northern Mexico will be considered. Small monetary awards are available for some pieces.

Local news from just the past few months suggests some possible short articles. For example, a article on how the Spanish influenza affected Las Cruces or some other local community in 1918-19 would be very relevant. Or, developers are threaten-

ing to tear down the old Las Cruces Country Club clubhouse, a Trost and Trost building – what is the history of that building?

The editors prefer submissions electronically as Word or simple text documents. Other formats can be negotiated. Also, they’d like end notes instead of footnotes. To submit an article or to ask questions, contact Jim Eckles by email: 19dach63@gmail.com or by phone at: 575-521-8771.

The deadline for final articles is October.

More information is available on the society’s website at: <http://www.donaanacountyhistsoc.org/HistoricalReview/Reviews.html>

Picacho Cemetery Donations Are Still Being Solicited

There have been a number of donations to the GoFundMe site for the DACHS effort to finalize work at the Picacho cemetery and turn it back over to the community. The historical society thanks all who have participated - the individuals paying for this out of their own pockets are especially thankful.

We now have enough funds to put up against a “matching grant” if we are awarded it this month. That money will be used to create a permanent sign for the cemetery explaining its history and listing the thirty-plus people we know are buried there.

If we collect a little more, it can be used to pay for the boundary fencing we are undertaking. That is complete on the west but the south is still wide open.

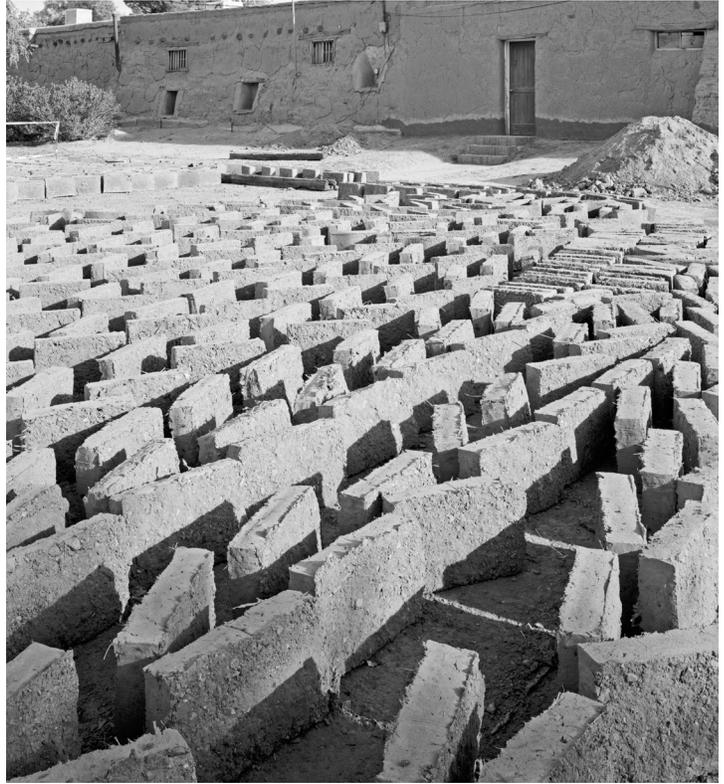
To donate, you can simply go to GoFundMe.com on the web. At the top left is a search function. You can get to the DACHS fund by entering “Sally Kading” or “Dona Ana County Historical Society.” The fund indicates the goal and also how much has been donated so far. By the way, Sally is the DACHS Historian and she has been the lead on the cemetery project.

Caption/Meme This.....

The May meme contest using another Library of Congress photo - just like last month. I haven't supplied my own caption for this photo - you are left totally up to yourselves. Just email the text of your submission to me at:

nebraska1950@comcast.net.

The winner of the April contest is Bob Gamboa. He supplied "Local traveler filling up the burro at the gas pump for the trip ahead. Not much gas needed as they get good gas mileage...." It was for the photo of the covered wagon and mule.



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