

NEWSLETTER

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Doña Ana County Historical Society

Early Mesilla Valley Images In NMSU Archive

By Dennis Daily
President, DACHS

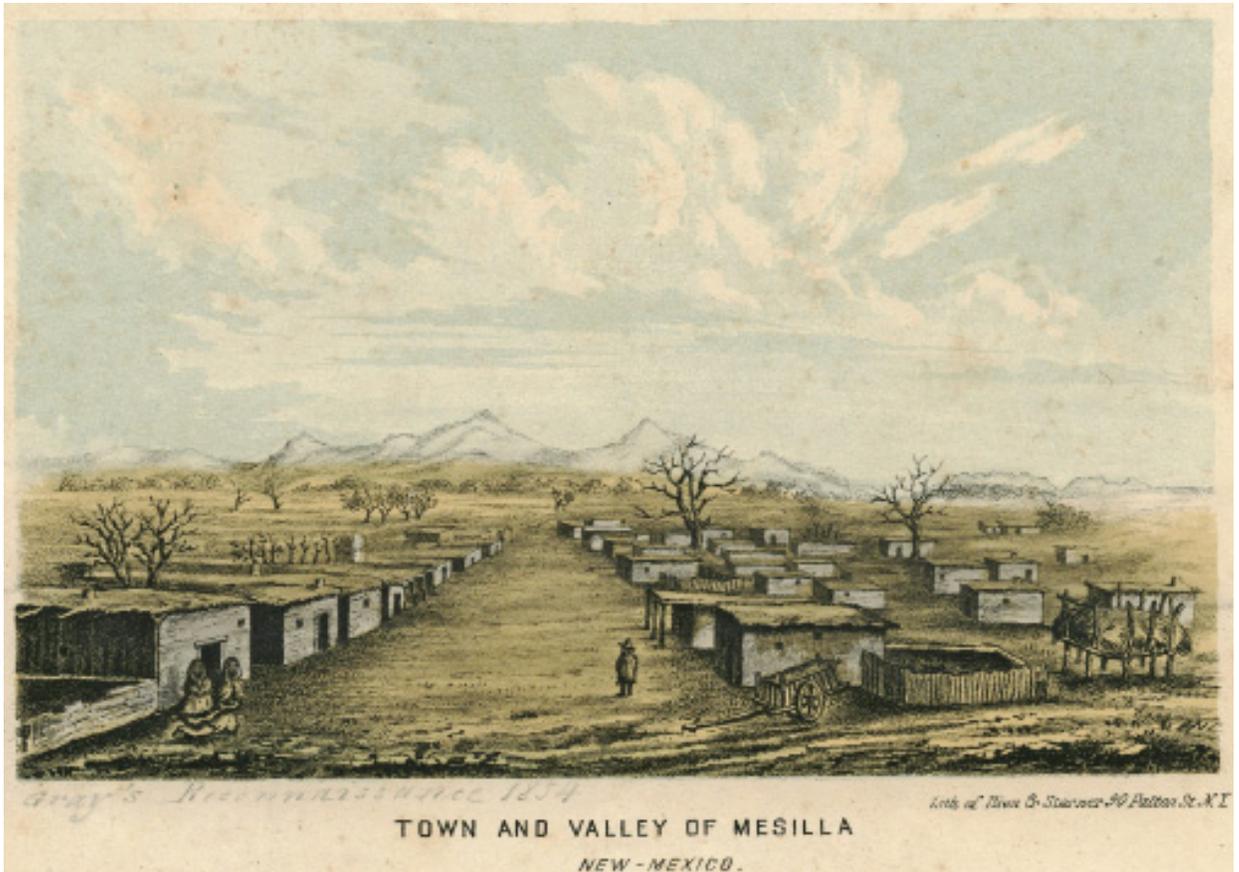
Editor's Note: Dennis posted this recently on "Open Stacks," an online NMSU resource (a blog) where staffers write about some of the items in the Archives. If you use Safari for your browser, you might not get in. I was able to access the site using Firefox.

The Mexican-American War was a mere six years in the past, and the international boundary line between the United States and Mexico was still being debated, when in early 1854 Carl Schuchard passed through the Mesilla Valley as artist with the A.B. Gray survey for the Texas Western Railroad Company. Schuchard's drawings of scenes in the Mesilla

Valley are among the earliest visual depictions of our region, showing views of the Organ Mountains, Fort Fillmore, and the newly founded town of Mesilla (still in Mexico at the time).

Prints made from Schuchard's drawings appeared in the inaugural edition of *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, December 15, 1855, and in Gray's published 1856 report *Survey of a Route for the Southern Pacific R.R. on the 32nd Parallel*, giving many Americans their first views of some of the new territory recently acquired as a result of the war with Mexico.

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Schuchard Images

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The Mexican-American War (1846-1848) was part of an aggressive land acquisition strategy of the United States government under the administration of President James Polk. The goal, to create a coast-to-coast nation, included the annexation of Texas in 1845 and the acquisition of Oregon from the British in 1846. The Mexican territory, through New Mexico to California, was valued in part because it could provide a route for a railroad to the Pacific coast.

Members of the U.S. Boundary Commission were bitterly divided between 1850 and 1854 as they argued about exactly where the international boundary line should be placed through the New Mexico territory. Andrew Belcher Gray, who served as surveyor for the Boundary Commission between 1849 and 1851, was an outspoken proponent of ensuring the international boundary was far enough south to allow for the railroad route. After he was dismissed from this government appointment because of his intractability on the subject, Gray took the job to survey the line for the Texas Western Railroad.

Carl Schuchard was born in Germany in 1827. He was educated as a mining engineer, but also possessed great skill as an artist. He emigrated from

his native Germany, along with his brother August, arriving at the port of Galveston in the newly formed state of Texas in September 1851.

His original destination had been the gold fields of California, but instead, like so many other of his countrymen, he settled in the hill country of eastern Texas, at Fredricksburg. In January 1854, Gray was outfitting his survey team in the area, passed through Fredricksburg, and hired the 26-year-old Schuchard to accompany his small party as artist.

The Gray survey set out from Fort Chadbourne on January 17, surveying 783 miles of Texas, including the forbidding Llano Estacado, and arriving at Paso del Norte (today's Ciudad Juarez) one month later. Gray's report describes the land vividly and Schuchard's illustrations, particularly of the Paso del Norte area and the Mesilla Valley, depict a landscape and culture that must have seemed quite exotic to the immigrant Schuchard.

Around El Paso, he sketched the Hueco Tanks, the passage of the Rio Grande between the Franklin and Juarez mountains, the town of El Paso del Norte

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Town of Paso del Norte (present day Ciudad Juarez) showing cathedral and plaza, 1854. Lithograph from drawing by Carl Schuchard (Image 03390015).

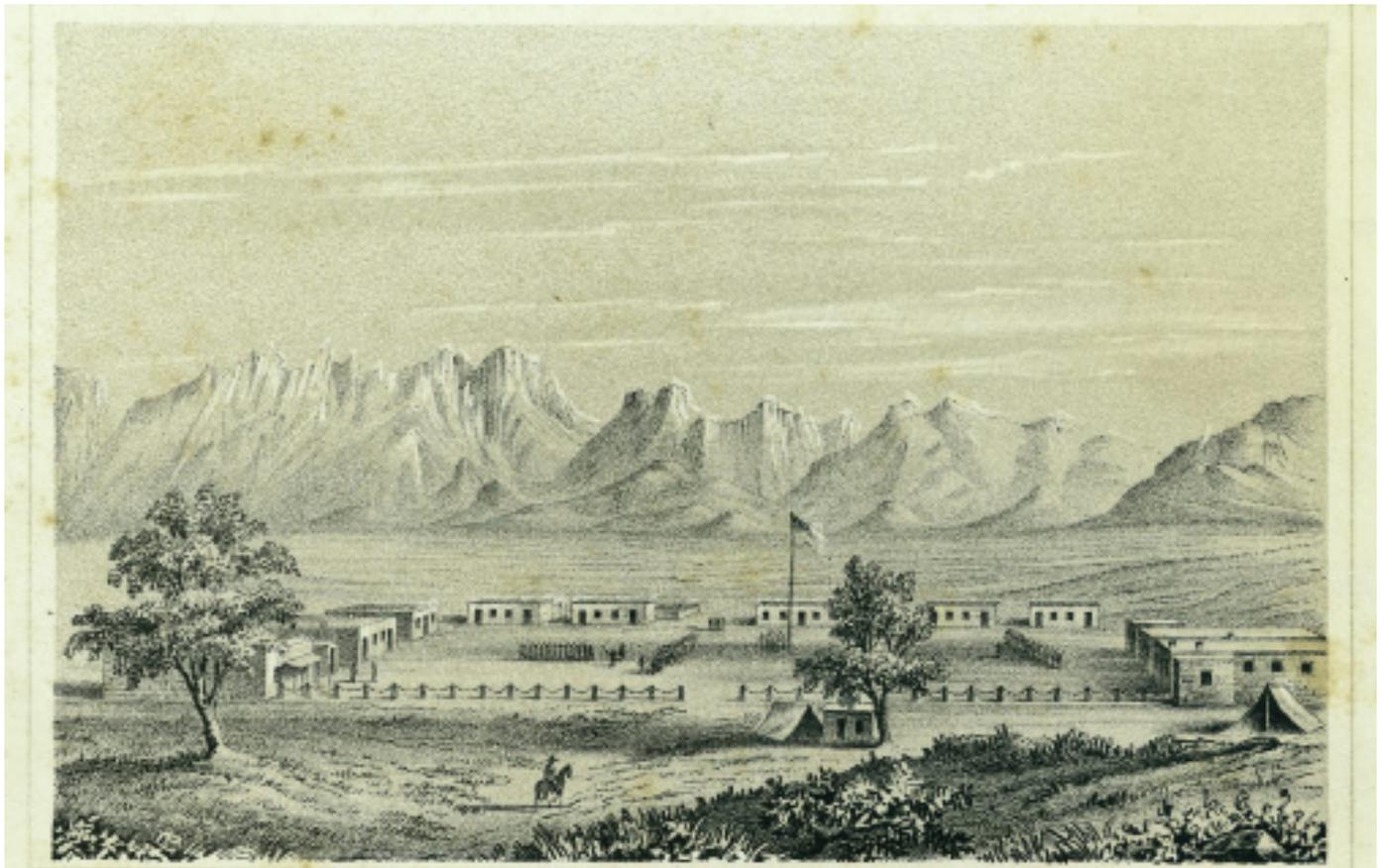
Schuchard Managed Mines ——— CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

(Ciudad Juarez), the Molino del Norte (Hart's Mill) at Franklin, and the falls of the Rio Grande. In the Las Cruces area, Schuchard sketched the "silver mines" of the Organ Mountains, the recently created army post of Fort Fillmore, and the town of Mesilla, which at that moment was the center of the controversy over the proper position of the U.S./ Mexico boundary. In April, the controversy would be resolved when Congress approved the Gadsden Purchase, placing the town and valley of Mesilla in the U.S. and providing the necessary land for a southern railroad to the Pacific. The survey team then continued through the deserts of New Mexico, Arizona, Chihuahua, Sonora and California, reaching San Diego on June 6.

Following the survey, Schuchard spent five years in Arizona dabbling in mining activities, but in 1859 he returned to Fredricksburg. Without delay, he married Anna Stahl. The couple had a daughter, Emilie, born June 1860, and a son Hermann, born October 1861. In 1862, Anna died and Carl Schuchard cut his ties with Texas to pursue mining interests in Mexico.

At various times, he was involved with mining outfits in Nuevo Leon, Zacatecas, Coahuila, and Chihuahua. By around 1880, he was managing the mining works at the Corralitos hacienda in Chihuahua, not far across the border from New Mexico, an area he had first visited during his stint with the A.B. Gray survey. "Don Carlos" Schuchard died at Corralitos in 1883 and was buried in the small cemetery of the hacienda.

Schuchard's original drawings created during the Gray survey reportedly were donated to the Smithsonian Institution, where they burned in a great fire in January 1865. NMSU Library Archives and Special Collections holds 48 lithographs of the Schuchard drawings, created for the 1856 publication of Gray's report to the Texas Western Railroad. The lithographs demonstrate Schuchard's artistic hand and represent an era of unprecedented U.S. expansionism. The lithographs can be viewed in the department's online image database – just type "Schuchard" into the search box.



Fort Fillmore, established 1851, and the Organ Mountains, just south of Las Cruces, 1854. Lithograph from drawing by Carl Schuchard (Image 03390019).

Genealogical Society To Offer Session On Scanning

One of our sister organizations, the Dona Ana County Genealogical Society, is going to hold their July meeting online instead of at Branigan Library. The topic is "Preserve Your Family Memories" by Doug Wilke. We thought many of you in the historical society might be interested in this.

Doug will explain how to scan your old family photos and documents like a pro. The basics of using a flatbed scanner—pixels, resolution, aspect ratio, and file types -- will all be covered. And for your "on-the-go" needs learn about a great scanning app for your smartphone or tablet.

We should mention that the app is FREE.

The presentation will take place on July 8 beginning at 2 p.m. It will be conducted via ZOOM, an internet meeting service which is fairly straight forward and free to use.

If you wish to view the presentation and are not a member of DACGS, you need to send an email no later than July 6, to: dacgslc@gmail.com with your request to attend the digital meeting. Attendance is limited to 300. You will then receive an invitation to join the meeting with the appropriate link/login information.

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