



Doña Ana County Historical Society

February 2026 Newsletter

DACHS Recognizes the Best in Local History

In one of the biggest turnouts in years, the Doña Ana County Historical Society gathered last Saturday to honor some of the places and people who've made an impact on preserving and telling the history of southern New Mexico and Doña Ana County.

DACHS recognized authors, podcasters, and oral historians, as well as several historic properties in our region, and inducted longtime (and now honorary lifetime) member and former Southern New Mexico Historical Review editor/contributor Jim Eckles into the DACHS Hall of Fame for his many years of tireless service to the organization.

DACHS members also got to welcome back past president Dr. Jon Hunner to serve as interim president. Dennis Daily, who has served as president for the past eight years (and is credited by many for rather selflessly keeping the organization going), formally passed the baton to Hunner, who has already begun organizing events related to the state's recognition of the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence.

Here's a rundown of the awards – see the awards program on the website for more detailed descriptions of each of these awards and the recipients.

Members also received copies of the newly published Southern New Mexico Historical Review, which is free to members and available for \$10 without a membership (see the item below on renewing or becoming a member).

AWARDS

- Hall of Fame inductee: Jim Eckles
- Heritage Award: Dr. Blanca Araujo, for the Stahmann Farms Oral History Project and exhibit at Branigan Cultural Center
- Buildings Worthy of Preservation: WC Kruger-designed 1st National Bank Building at 500 S. Main, and the Manuel Gregorio Acosta murals in the lobby; also the site of Eugene Van Patten Hall, formerly located at 1885 410 N. Armijo
- Endangered Historic Property: Historic Doña Ana Village Cemetery, at the corner of Ledesma Rd & Joe Gutierrez St. in the Village of Doña Ana
- Noteworthy Restoration or Renovation Award: The Taylor-Mesilla Historic Site at 2350 Calle Principal in Mesilla
- Gemoets Prize for Outstanding Article, Southern N.M. Historical Review: Guinivere Mayse
- K.D. Stoes Prize for Outstanding Writing/Editing, Southern N.M. Historical Review: Hannah Augustyniak
- Hiram Hadley Prize, best pioneer article, Southern N.M. Historical Review: Troy Ainsworth
- Pasajero Del Camino Real Award, for a significant historical publication: The Doña Ana County Clerk's Office for the Preserving History and Democracy Podcast, and George R. Matthews for his 2025 book, "Billy the Kid: The Life Behind the Legend."

Giddy Up! Hillsboro Stagecoach Kicks Off DACHS Speaker Series

The Doña Ana County Historical Society Speaker Series begins Thursday February 19 with historian Steve Dobrott, who will discuss the preservation of the 136-year old Mountain Pride stagecoach that once served the mining towns of Lake Valley, Hillsboro and Kingston.

All DACHS Speaker Series are free and take place at 7 p.m. in the downstairs auditorium at Las Cruces Village's Social Center (formerly Good Sam's), located at 3011 Buena Vista Circle.

Dobrott is the immediate past president of the Hillsboro Historical Society, which he joined after retiring from managing the Ladder Ranch for 24 years. He became interested in the iconic stagecoach, which amazingly was still around and on exhibit in Lincoln, NM under the direction of the History Museum of NM and the Department of Cultural Affairs.

Since the founding of the Society in 2008, there was an interest in getting the Mountain Pride back to Hillsboro. But every effort to do so was thwarted for a variety of reasons. But persistence paid off as the Society's efforts were rewarded after convincing the History Museum of NM and the Department of Cultural Affairs and the NM Museum Board of Regents that the coach belonged back in Hillsboro at the Society's Black Range Museum. The effort resulted in the deaccession of the coach from the permanent collection of the History Museum and the transfer of ownership to the Hillsboro Historical Society last July by unanimous vote of the NM Museum Board of Regents.

With the support of the HHS Board of Directors, Steve was instrumental in achieving this goal that he began in earnest in 2019. His talk will present the amazing story of the Mountain Pride, its historical significance in the development of Sierra County and to outline the steps that were taken to get the coach back to Hillsboro where it once rolled 110 years ago.

Hey! Ho! Let's Go!: NMSU features El Paso Punk Rock Historian

The departments of History and Anthropology at NMSU will present cultural historian Tara López, who will discuss her recent book *Chuco Punk: Sonic Insurgency in El Paso* (published through the American Music Series at the University of Texas Press).

The talk takes place Tuesday February 10 at 4:30 pm in Breland Hall, Room 182 at NMSU.

An associate professor of Ethnic and Latinx Studies at Minnesota's Winona State University, López studies social and cultural movements, especially among the working class and communities of color, according to a news release from NMSU.

In her book, which received the 2025 Al Lowman Memorial Prize from the Texas State Historical Association López brings to light the dynamic and rich historical, cultural, and social roots of punk rock music/culture in El Paso from the late 1970s to the early 2000s.

By centering the narrative on the "punx" themselves, especially the women and Mexican-American punx who comprised the dominant force in this area's music world, the far-reaching influence of El Paso punk rock on music, history and space emerges.

Nopalito's Rewinds to the Era of Doo-Wop

A Still Small Voice and Nopalito's Garden is inviting all to attend "Rediscovering Music – A Look Back at DooWop" this Wednesday February 11 at 6pm at Nopalito's Restaurant, 310 S. Mesquite Street.

Led by music historian Ron Cooke, the event is being billed as a "music listening party and historical talk" that explores and celebrates the vocal genre of "DooWop."

Even before the rise of birth of rock-n-roll, young folks in cities like New York, Chicago and Philadelphia formed small acapella singing groups, often performing wherever they could - on street corners, school hallways and apartment stoops, and eventually the big stage. By the 1950s, the smooth, infectious sound of groups like Frankie Lymon and the Teenagers, the Moonglows and the Marcells filled the pop charts alongside the emergence of

rock-n-roll.

The talk is part of the continuing series of historical-themed talks presented by A Still Small Voice and Nopalito's, which was recently featured on the Preserving History and Democracy podcast.

The event is free and light refreshments will be served.

Farm and Ranch Hosts WSMR Museum Curator

The Friends of the New Mexico Farm and Ranch Heritage Museum Culture Series will present Darren Court, the curator of the White Sands Missile Range Museum, New Mexico's only active Army museum.

The "More Than Just Missiles" talk takes place Thursday February 12 at 7 pm in the main auditorium at the New Mexico Farm and Ranch Heritage Museum, located at 4100 Dripping Springs Road.

For more than 30 years, the WSMR Museum has collected, preserved, and exhibited artifacts and other materials relating to the history of WSMR and the Tularosa Basin. The museum also explores the history of the surrounding lands' native peoples and cultures, its flora and fauna, and natural geology and landscapes.

Court, who has led the museum since 2008, will be explaining how the museum operates and functions, as well as the history of its development.

Admission is free. The event will also be livestreamed at facebook.com/FriendsNMFRHM. For more information, contact friends.nmfrhm@gmail.com.

The Friends of the New Mexico Farm and Ranch Heritage Museum's Culture Series is a monthly program that brings history, culture, and storytelling to life. Each event is free and open to the public, with presentations ranging from local history to the arts, agriculture, and traditions that shape New Mexico.

NMSU History Prof to Discuss Black Americans in the West

Dr. Laura Hooton will explore Black Americans in Mexico in the early 20th century as part of a free online talk presented by Camp Naco, a relatively new historic site in Bisbee, Arizona that is focused on African Americans in the borderlands.

The online talk takes place Thursday February 12 from 5-6 pm and is free but you must register at campnacoaz.org/events.

Hooton will explore African Americans in Mexico during the era of the Mexican Revolution. It will include information about her research on "Little Liberia," but also overviews of some other well-known folks like prize fighter Jack Johnson, Buffalo Soldiers sent into Mexico to search for Pancho Villa, and Harlem Renaissance author Langston Hughes.

Hooton recently developed with her students a historical exhibit examining Black Americans in the West, which is now on display at Zuhl Library at NMSU and will be featured at the upcoming Historic Preservation Committee meeting February 18 (see news item below on that meeting).

Las Cruces Historic Preservation Committee To Discuss Adobe Preservation

The city's Historic Preservation Committee will present a panel discussion on adobe heritage and preservation in the Mesilla Valley at its upcoming meeting Wednesday February 18, at the Woman's Improvement Association Building, located at 340 N. Raymond Street.

Panelists include adoberos and preservationists from around the valley, including Liana Aguirre, historic preservation specialist for the town of Mesilla, local contractor Marco Dominguez, Querencia Mi Mesilla's Pat Taylor, and Eric Liefeld of Mesilla Valley Preservation, Inc.

Also at the meeting will be an exhibit on regional African American history, produced by NMSU students under the direction of Dr. Laura Hooton. The exhibit is currently located at the Zuhl Library at NMSU, with a group of students and their panels traveling across town to the HPC meeting. Attendees are encouraged to come early to look over the panels and engage with students about their research.

The committee is also hosting two public work sessions at the end of the month to gain feedback on the current content draft of the Design Guidelines document. The first work sessions will be Wednesday, February 25, at 6 p.m., at the Papen Center in Mesilla Park; the second will be held Saturday, February 28, at 2 p.m., at the WIA building on Raymond Street. Once published, the Design Guidelines will provide achievable standards for the preservation and continued use of buildings that represent the heritage of Las Cruces.

Members of the public are asked to look over the document and then give feedback during the work sessions to help shape the guidelines for improved use by historic district residents and the larger community.

For more information, please contact Caitlin Beesley at cbeesley@lascruces.gov or at (575)528-3027.

History Day Needs Las Cruces Judges

Saved from an uncertain fate by the Historical Society of New Mexico after federal funding cuts last year, 2026 National History Day now needs you to make the event happen.

Recent years have perhaps seen a decline in local participation, but organizers say this year many dozens of high school students from all around our area are expected to take part, and the event really needs lots of volunteers to serve as judges.

The Las Cruces contest will be held February 20.

It's actually easy to sign up - just register on the National History Day website at the zFairs NHD Registration Portal - and anyone who has ever served as judge can tell you, it's a fun day that really can have a positive, affirmative impact on so many kids, as well as inspire in them a life-long interest in history.

Judges are expected to be at the contest from approximately 8 am - 2 pm on the day of the event. They will receive training in the morning before events begin, as well as a light breakfast and lunch.

National History Day gathers high school students and groups from around the state to create and present projects about U.S. history, from posters and essays to web sites and documentaries. Winners of regional and state contests ultimately move on to the national contest.

This year's theme "Revolution, Reaction, Reform in History" reflects the focus this year across the nation and in New Mexico on the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence, which is expected to bring much celebration and reflection.

NHD in NM officially transferred to the Historical Society of New Mexico in January. According to news reports, the National Endowment for the Humanities eliminated grant funding for the NHD last year, with some fearing the end of the National History Day event nationwide.

See the NHD website for the details - there will likely be an online training session. Register online at least two weeks before a particular contest:

2026 NHD in NM Contest Schedule

2/9/26 - NW Regional at San Juan College Library, Farmington, NM

2/17/26 - SE Regional at Eastern New Mexico University, Portales, NM

2/20/26 - Las Cruces Public Schools Senior District Contest, Las Cruces, NM

2/24/26 - Southern Regional at Western New Mexico University, Silver City, NM

3/5/26 - Northern Regional at the NM History Museum and Main Public Library, Santa Fe, NM

3/13/26 - Central Regional at CNM Smith-Brasher Hall, Albuquerque, NM.

4/17/26 - State contest at CNM Smith-Brasher Hall, Albuquerque, NM

For more information, contact NHD in New Mexico state coordinator Stephanie Wilson at swilson@historyday-nm.com or Kathryn Karl, assistant coordinator, at kkarl@historydaynm.com.

It's Membership Renewal Time!

If you have not done so already (and thanks to all who have!), it is time to renew your membership in the Histor-

ical Society.

The easiest way to renew or join is through the DACHS website. Just go to the home page, click on the “membership” link in the top menu or scroll down to “quick links” where there are buttons for membership and donations.

Once “membership” is selected you’ll go to a Paypal page where you can select your membership level, enter your contact information (a good email address, physical address and phone number are essential), and then pay using your regular credit card or your Paypal account, if you have one. Or you can also print out the full membership form available as a PDF, fill it out and mail it with your check to the DACHS P.O. Box shown on the header of this form.

THANKS for your support.