



NEWSLETTER

April 2024

Doña Ana County Historical Society

Christopher Schurtz To Speak On How N.M. Communities Have Remembered Bataan

Local historian Christopher Schurtz will speak on **April 18 at 7 p.m.** at the DACHS monthly public meeting at the Good Samaritan auditorium. Schurtz will discuss the various and sometimes surprising ways in which New Mexico recognizes and memorializes the Bataan Death March.

According to the Bataan Museum, the New Mexico 200th and 515th Coast Artillery units stationed in the Philippines when the Japanese invaded had 1,816 men. Almost half, 829, died in battle, while prisoners, or immediately after liberation. There were 987 survivors. Every county in New Mexico lost men.

Christopher Schurtz is a New Mexico historian who focuses on the history of Las Cruces and the Mesilla Valley. A former reporter

for the *Las Cruces Sun-News*, Schurtz has a master's degree in history from NMSU and is the author of the book *Historic Las Cruces*.

In addition, Schurtz has served as a historical consultant and researcher for local museums, and since 2016 has taught courses in U.S. history and military history at NMSU and El Paso Community College. He recently received the Hiram Hadley Award from DACHS for his article on the first aerial photograph of Las Cruces.

A descendant of a Bataan March survivor, Schurtz is also the vice president of the Remember Bataan Foundation.

The auditorium is at 3011 Buena Vida Cr. If we can set up to Zoom the presentation, we will send out the invitation along with the meeting reminder a few days before.



Las Cruces has commemorated Bataan with this bronze statue by sculptor Kelley S. Hestir in Veterans Park. It depicts two soldiers helping an injured third so he will not be bayoneted by the Japanese guards. Behind and in front of the statue are the footprints set in concrete of Bataan survivors. Christopher's parents, Gerry and Bonnie Schurtz, made plaster castings of many of the survivors in order to make the impressions.

Photo by Jim Eckles

With The Death Of Evan Davies, The Collections In The Institute Of Historical Survey Are Being Sent To Appropriate Institutions

By Dennis Daily

We were all greatly saddened last year by the passing of our friend Evan Davies. Evan was a long-time member and supporter of the Dona Ana County Historical Society, but of course his crowning achievement was the establishment of the Institute of Historical Survey Foundation (IHSF). I'm sure others recall the details of the story better than I, but Evan recounted to me that when he was a university student in the 1950s, he saw someone dumping a cache of old papers into the trash and he couldn't bear to see these materials lost to history, so he salvaged them. This put him on the path of historical preservation, which became his lifelong, all-consuming passion.

Evan established IHSF in the 1970s and gained non-profit status for the organization in 1982. In the 1990s, he received financial support to build IHSF's headquarters on south Main Street in Mesilla Park. The space served as an archive, library, and research center. Anyone who has visited IHSF, and Evan welcomed everyone, was awestruck by the amount of historical materials that filled every corner of the space. Equally, the technical equipment needed to reproduce practically any format of audio, video, microfilm, photography, and other storage media filled various rooms.

Evan's collecting interests were wide ranging and were not bound by specific topics or geography. The collections he acquired represented all parts of the world and just about any area of human endeavor. Most came from local donors. During decades of collecting, Evan acquired a massive collection.

I first met Evan when I was a staff member at the NMSU Library Archives in the early 2000s. We shared interests in microfilm, obscure audiovisual formats, and of course the history and cultural heritage of our region. When I returned to the NMSU Archives in 2016 as department head, Evan was one of the first people who warmly welcomed me back. He was always gracious and encouraging to me. We collaborated on many occasions and enjoyed visiting about our mutual passion for preserving historical information.

Since Evan's passing, the board of IHSF and the staff there have been assessing the future of the organization, with an eye to dispersing the collections

and closing down in the coming years. Staff members Anne Morgan, Leslie Bergloff, Richard Layne, and others are tackling the mammoth task of ensuring that the materials at the facility are transferred to appropriate institutions or responsibly returned to donors. Most collections related to New Mexico and our border region have been flagged to come to our repository at the NMSU Library. Working with the dedicated IHSF staff, we have already received a massive amount of material. As transfer of these archives progresses over the next few years, I look forward to ensuring that Evan's incredible legacy in our region is honored and carried forward. I hope Evan would be pleased to know that his collections will be preserved and made available for research in perpetuity here in Las Cruces.



By Jim Eckles

In addition to the NMSU archives, some of this material has already been moved to the White Sands Missile Range Museum's archive. Gerry Veara, a volunteer at the archive, figures he has already moved over 75 boxes of material. That is tough to do in his little pickup. With the help of the White Sands Missile Range Historical Foundation, he is renting a box truck to move the bulk of it.

Museum director Darren Court and archivist Jenn Jet went through an initial list of materials trying to identify things that apply to the missile range. Hundreds and hundreds of WSMR employees have retired to Las Cruces since the range was started in 1945. Some of them donated their stuff to Evan. The logical place for the material is now out at White Sands.

Veara has been cataloging documents, photos and videos for several years at the museum. He said what has always made his day when doing such paperwork is finding something new, something unusual - a "find." It will take a lot of time, but he is hoping they can find some treasures in the material from IHSF. As they do this, they will also be looking to see if items should go back to families or on to some other organization. Veara said they already have some set-asides for the Space Museum.

A Blaze Of Poppies Author To Speak At Library

On April 22, The Friends' Author Talk at 1:30 p.m. in the Roadrunner Room of Branigan Library will feature Jennifer Bohnhoff. She'll be speaking about the expedition to capture Pancho Villa (unsuccessful, as we know) after he attacked the town of Columbus, NM. She explains how this figured in the preparation of the US for its role in World War I. Technological innovations revolutionized war going forward. And why did Gen. "Black Jack" Pershing insist on putting New Mexico's National Guard into action in France.

Jennifer will have copies of her book *A Blaze of Poppies* for sale and will be happy to sign them.

For more information you can contact Susan Ansara at her email: ansara@me.com or by phone at 575-649-8786.



General Pershing, center, with reporters in Columbus prior to heading into Mexico in hot pursuit of Pancho Villa. Remarkably, the Columbus raid took place on March 9, 1917 and less than a week later Pershing was leading 6,000 troops into Mexico.

Genealogical Society Has Tips On Collecting Family Stories

Collecting stories and your family can be difficult as many relatives may be reluctant to talk about their memories. Or there may be problems getting the information organized so it makes sense. The Dona Ana County Genealogical Society is offering a class on getting those stories on April 10 at 2 p.m. at Branigan Memorial Library in the Roadrunner Room.

The class is being given by Karen Ray who is the owner of Remembering the Time memoir and family

history service. She works to inspire people to tell and share their stories, creating a life legacy of their personal memories. She will help you learn how to elicit those memories so they will be remembered.

This meeting will be in person and on Zoom.

For non-DACGS members: To join via Zoom, send an email request, including your name and telephone number, to: dacgslc@gmail.com. The request, with your name and phone number, must be received two (2) days prior to the meeting.

Do You Or Someone You Know Have Ties To Fort Craig?

Bureau of Land Management
&
Public Lands Interpretive Association

FORT CRAIG



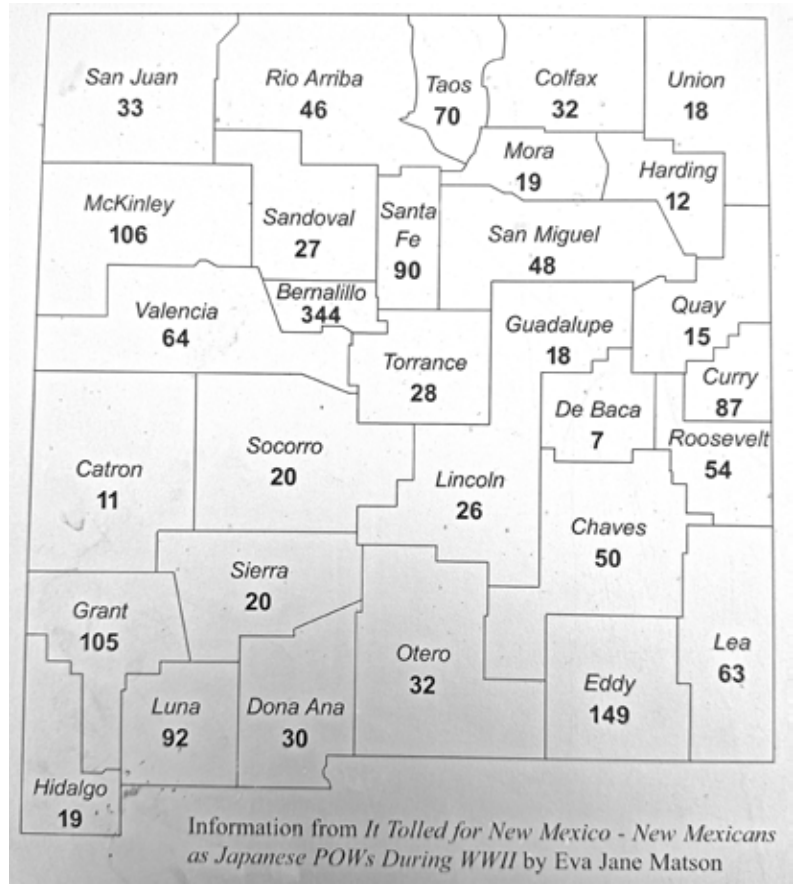
The Public Lands Interpretive Association is seeking individuals and families that have a connection to communities of people, which include the Warm Springs Band of Apache, the New Mexico Volunteers, the Colorado Volunteers, Buffalo Soldiers, and descendants from local settlers near the Socorro area.

The organization is interested in collecting audio, photographs, diary entries, and interviews from individuals. Their goal is to represent the many different perspectives that make up this unique time in history. With this project, they hope to further enhance the Fort Craig experience. Any information gathered will be added to their documentary series, currently being displayed in a new interpretive display kiosk at the Fort Craig Visitor Center.

For more information, you can reach out, to Camisha Cordova by May 25 at ccordova@plia.org.

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This is from one of the signs in the Las Cruces Veterans Park in the Bataan section. It shows how many men from each New Mexico county ended up in the Philippines as Japanese prisoners.



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