



NEWSLETTER

April 2015

NOTES FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

Susan Krueger

Programs and Speakers for the Fall

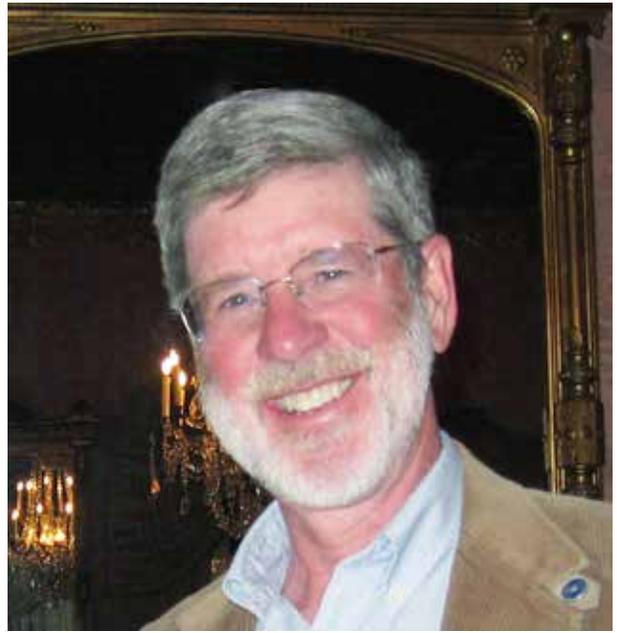
At our March 10 meeting, the DACHS Board considered a list of programs and speakers for the fall including programs on Fabian Garcia, the Mogollon culture, and the community of Tortugas; suggestions for speakers included Beth O'Leary, Diana Bustamante, Katrina Parks on the Harvey Girls, a Hiram Hadley presentation, Paul Ward on Lorenzo Torrez, and a speaker from the NM Jewish Historical Society Conference. If you have a person you would like to see speak or a topic to be presented at a membership meeting, please speak to a Board member.

APRIL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

JOIN US ON APRIL 16, 7 p.m. AT THE GOOD SAMARITAN AUDITORIUM

At the Doña Ana County Historical Society meeting on April 16, Jim Eckles will use his new book *Trinity: The History of an Atomic Bomb National Historic Landmark* as a resource to talk about the 70th anniversary of the world's first atomic bomb explosion - just up the road near Socorro, NM. In addition to speaking about what has happened at Trinity Site over the years, he will show some photos that have never been published before. In addition, he will have a couple of pieces of Trinitite, the glass created in the explosion's fireball, on display. The presentation is free and open to the public. It will start at 7 p.m. at the Good Samaritan Auditorium at 3011 Buena Vida Circle.

Jim Eckles grew up in Nebraska and attended the University of Nebraska. He majored in psychology and English lit. A masters in literature followed at the University of Washington



Jim Eckles

but he was saved from a life in academia when, in 1977, he was offered a job in the White Sands Public Affairs Office. He worked there until 2007 when he retired.

During his time at the range ---

- *he saw the Space Shuttle Columbia land,
- *he followed the Noss treasure hunters into Victorio Peak,
- *he escorted dozens of ranch families to visit their old homes,
- *he got to experience many ear splitting explosions and missile launches,
- *and he has probably been to Trinity Site more than any other human being.

He rides a bicycle, hikes and backpacks, plays golf, is on the White Sands Missile Range Historical Foundation board of directors and, if you'll fly him there, would love to take photos of Britain for you. Jim has authored two books, *Pocketful Of Rockets: History And Stories Behind White Sands Missile Range* and *Trinity: The History Of An Atomic Bomb National Historic Landmark*, available from Jim and normal book outlets. He and his wife Debbie live in Las Cruces.

At the Annual Awards Luncheon on January 31, 2015 two Heritage Awards were presented.

2015 Heritage Award Recipients



Authors of *The Heart of Las Cruces: History of St. Genevieve's Church* (seated) Olivia Lerma McDoñald, Rosemary Leyva, (standing) Dawn Moore Santiago, Celeste Conrad, (not pictured) Rev. Ricardo Bauza and Rev. Christopher Williams

regional import to familial and personal recollections, their work examines the historical evolution of this faith community, which has played a crucial role in the development of Las Cruces. For over a century St. Genevieve's Catholic Church served as the actual physical heart of Las Cruces, the most recognizable feature of the community's downtown. The complex and intriguing story of the establishment, growth, and expansion of the church is detailed. The loss of the "old" church building during the physical and social transformations of the parish during the 1960's, and a re-commitment to the sacrifice and service centered on the "new" church provide a tangible historical narrative for future generations. ■

The Society would like to thank Nathan Stone, Manager of the Fort Selden Historic Site, for his presentation at the March membership meeting. If you would like to know more about their current events and programs, visit their web site at nmmonuments.org/fort-selden.

The March Newsletter included a section from Madeleine Vessel's book *Doña Ana County Historical Society 1963-1994*, about the beginnings of Fort Selden. Below is a continuation of the history of the Fort once it reverted to private ownership. In 1926, it was acquired by Harry H. Bailey.

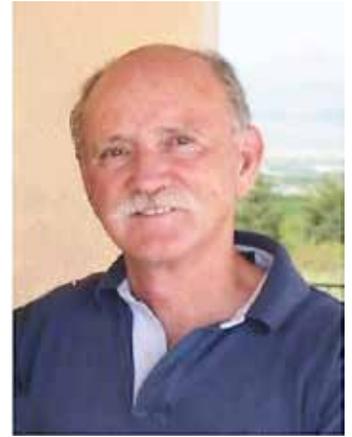
A Ruin after 1891

By the time Bailey took ownership, Fort Selden was well on its way to ruination. Its deterioration began shortly after its abandonment, brought on by

The Authors collectively receive the Heritage Award for their work in preserving the history of St. Genevieve's Catholic Church through the publication of *The Heart of Las Cruces, History of St. Genevieve's Church*.

In ten essays, ranging from the chronological to the sacred, and with stories from national and regional

Bob Gamboa is an avid avocational photographer. He has photographed historic people, places, and events for as long as anyone can remember. Photography runs in his family. He recalls his mother, Maggie Lucero Gamboa, photographing his own family using a Kodak Box camera. Bob will also tell you about his uncle, Armand Lucero, a WW II Army Air Corp reconnaissance photographer.



Bob Gamboa

While employed by Bell Laboratories at White Sands Missile Range, Bob was busy photographing the development of the Nike Missile. When he was transferred to Kwajalein Atoll in the Marshall Islands, he spent many hours documenting many of the WW II ruins. In each subsequent move, Bob and his camera documented his world. His photographs have been published in company periodicals, newspapers, Chamber of Commerce promotions, and newsletters including our own.

Bob has used his camera to document tours of local history, Society field trips, and events of our day that will be noted by historians of the future. Bob Gamboa is recognized for his continuing contributions to the Society with the Heritage Award. ■

* Photos and narrative from Luncheon Program by Mary Kay Shannon



The barracks at Ft. Selden. Negative # 055040
Photo from Ft. Selden Website.

See Ft. Selden on page 3

Ft. Selden from page 2

the removal of essential wooden supports from various structures. It is believed that the individual who handled the re-interment of the post's military dead was given permission to salvage what was left of the fort's reusable building materials. What he didn't take was soon carried off by local people, rendering the adobe walls vulnerable to the various moods of mother nature. Roofless and continually subjected to sand-blasting, spring winds and violent, summer thunderstorms, the old post's walls crumbled away. Vandals and treasure hunters also contributed to the fort's deterioration. The stone walls of the two-story guardhouse reportedly stood eight feet high in 1935. Forty years later, so many stones had been carried off, that many walls were level with the ground. Sometime in the 1930s, Bailey approached Hugh M. Milton II, who was President of New Mexico College of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts (New Mexico A & M), now known as New Mexico State University (NMSU), with his concerns about Fort Selden's deterioration and his hope that the state or the federal government could be persuaded to make Fort Selden into a state or national park. Although Milton was in sympathy with Bailey's concerns, the pressures of administering the college and subsequent long absences kept him from being personally involved. Milton was President of New Mexico A & M until he was sent to serve in the South Pacific during World War II. After the war, Milton served as President of the New Mexico Military Institute in Roswell until 1953 when he was called to serve under President Dwight D. Eisenhower as Assistant Secretary and later Under Secretary of the Army.

Project to Save Fort Selden-1962

It wasn't until 1961, after Milton returned from Washington, D. C. to become Vice President of the First National Bank of Doña Ana County, that he finally had time to focus attention on the plight of Fort Selden. One day, in casual conversation with the bank's president, Frank O. Papen, Milton expressed his desire to do something about preserving the old post. By now, Milton regarded Fort Selden not only as part of an important era of military history that should be preserved, but also as the fondly remembered boyhood home (for a brief period) of his now dear friend, General Douglas MacArthur. Milton had served with MacArthur in the South Pacific during the war and remembered his reminiscing about living at Fort Selden as a child and his hope "that the old adobe walls and columns still standing would never be allowed to crumble back into the earth from which they had risen." MacArthur's father, Captain Arthur MacArthur, commanded Fort Selden from 1884 to 1886.

Milton's enthusiasm prompted Papen's encouragement, and as a result, Milton began garnering support for a project to make Fort Selden into a state park or monument. Respected and loved by many in the Mesilla Valley, it was not difficult for him to rally local history buffs to his cause. In addition, Milton managed to spark an interest in the New Mexico State Park and Recreation Commission (NMSPRC) to establish Fort Selden as a state park, and he prevailed upon the Mesilla Valley Chamber of Commerce to endorse the project with a formal resolution.

More about how the DACHS became active in saving Fort Selden in subsequent newsletters. ■

-----Cut along dotted line-----

Doña Ana County Historical Society, P. O. Box 16045, Las Cruces, NM 88004-6045

DACHS Membership Form

Please renew/enroll my/our membership in the Doña Ana County Historical Society. Memberships are active for the calendar year of enrollment and fees are deductible within legal limits for Federal and State income tax purposes. If you are unsure of your status or have questions regarding membership, please contact the President, Susan Krueger, at 575 525-0654.

Annual Membership/Sponsorship Rates

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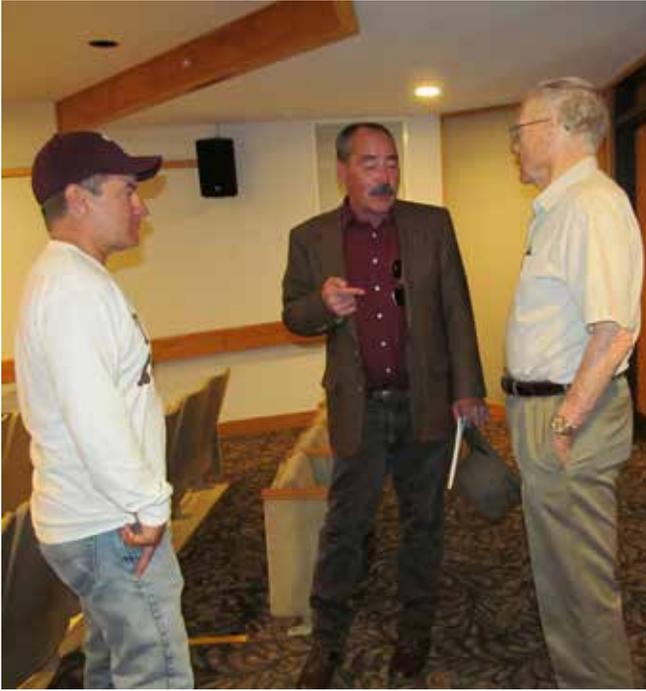
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Nathan Stone discussing Fort Selden with two audience members after his presentation.

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