

# NEWSLETTER

January 2025

Doña Ana County Historical Society

## Annual Awards Banquet Is Set For January 25

The Doña Ana County Historical Society will hold its annual awards luncheon on January 25 at noon in the La Posta restaurant in La Mesilla. Members, guests and the public are invited. As you might guess, given the location, we will be having a Mexican buffet.

Reservations are required with pre-payment preferred so we don't lose money again. The deadline for making a reservation and paying is January 18.

### THE AWARDS

There are two prizes that will be awarded to authors for articles in the soon to be published *Southern New Mexico Historical Review*. These were selected by Review editor Jim Eckman.

☞ Doyle Daves's article "Helen Haines, Age 19, Author of *History of New Mexico* (1891)" will receive the Gemoets Prize for Outstanding Article.

☞ Frank Brito's article "Treachery and Tragedy in Sonora at the Cañon de Los Embudos" for the Hiram Hadley Prize for Outstanding Article on Pioneer History. Members

will receive their copies of the Review at the luncheon. Non-members can purchase a copy for \$10.

☞ The slot canyon 4.2 miles north of the Blue Moon Bar in Radium Springs will be recognized for the Old Timer's Award.

☞ The three crosses that have marked the north entrance to Las Cruces since 1940 when they were first erected for the 400th anniversary of Coronado's expedition into our area. They are considered a property with historical significance.

☞ Tommy's Roller Rink with its iconic sign will be recognized as a building worthy of preservation.

☞ A row of houses in the 1200 block of University Avenue will be listed as endangered historic properties. A series of houses similar to these 1930's homes was bulldozed last year.

☞ Christopher Schurtz will receive the Pasajero Del Camino Real award for his book *Historic Las Cruces: the Story of Las Cruces & The Mesilla Valley*. This book was published by the Foundation for Las Cruces Museums.

### Luncheon Reservations Required Before January 18 -- Three Options

1. Go to the society's website at: [www.donaanacountyhistsoc.org/](http://www.donaanacountyhistsoc.org/) Scroll down to "Donations" and click on the yellow 'donate' button. This will take you to the PayPal site where you just use your regular credit card. Enter the amount for one, two or more tickets - \$25 for one person, \$50 for two, etc. Click on "Donate With Debit Or Credit Card." Next you will fill in the information that the forms require. **HERE'S THE IMPORTANT PART** - there will be a "write a note" window for you to enter the names of the people attending. We need that information to create a list for check-in and to make name tags. If you have a question, email Jim at [nebraska1950@comcast.net](mailto:nebraska1950@comcast.net).
2. Mail Jim Eckles your check for the correct amount, including the names of attendees, and make sure he receives it by Jan. 18. His address is 4071 Sotol Dr., Las Cruces, NM 88011.
3. Email Jim Eckles that you wish to pay at the door so he can put you on the list. Your cost will be \$30 for each person. Cash is preferred if you are paying at the door.

# Fluorspar Mining Once Flourished Around Las Cruces

By Jim Eckles

The other day I was steered to a subgroup on FaceBook called "I love the Organ Mountains." Someone had posted photos of the Hayner mine and its ruins located just a few miles south of Organ. The trail to the old mine and its stone cabin is the old road which takes off from Baylor Canyon Rd. On Google maps it shows as "Mine House/Rabbit Ears Trail." The mine is in the national monument now.

This mine is also called the "Ruby Mine" and some assume it was where rubies were extracted. That question came up on the FB feed. There are no rubies anywhere near us. Believe me, if there had been a local ruby mine, you would have heard of it as that is pretty sexy compared to a fluorspar mine which is what Frank Hayner and his partner Sam Manasse were digging out of the ground. Fluorspar is the commercial version of fluorite.

However, one person suggested the men named it "Ruby" after a person who was important to one of them. I found newspaper accounts saying before the war the mine was simply called the Hayner Fluorspar Mine. It looks like later owners changed it to "Ruby," maybe to show new ownership.

I suggested the term ruby might have been used because one of fluorspar's many colors is a deep red-dish/purple – maybe like a ruby. In a pure state, fluorspar is clear and impurities give it a color - yttrium makes it purple. Also, it should be noted that there were all kinds of mines named Ruby in New Mexico and the Southwest. It was a very common name.

In other writings I have proposed that Doc Noss may have used fluorspar crystals to dupe people into investing into his lost treasure scheme at Victorio Peak by saying his jar of fluorspar crystals was actually full of uncut rubies. After all, who has actually seen an uncut, unpolished ruby???

Fluorspar doesn't sound very interesting for a mine, certainly not like gold or silver. It isn't a metal but is a mineral. It turns out to be very useful in all kinds of processes. I found dozens of individual uses for the stuff ranging from jewelry to flux for smelting metals to optics.

It so happens that our little niche in southern New Mexico had several fluorspar mines that operated mostly in the first half of the 20th century and Frank Hayner was a major player in many of these operations. In addition to his "ruby" mine, his big-

gest and most productive mine was on the east side of Elephant Hill, also now known as "A" Mountain and more appropriately as Tortugas Mountain. That's right, a hundred years ago, locals called it Elephant Hill. In the 1920s there were newspaper reports of him selling this mine for \$50,000 to a corporation. You see evidence of the mine on the east side of the mountain when you walk or bike around it.

Further south, Hayner also extracted fluorspar at a mine at the base of Bishop's Cap, a peak that looks something like a bishop's miter from the right angle. Reminds me of my days as an altar boy during the bishop's masses. The mine is east of Mesquite at the south end of the Organ Mtns.

To the northwest of Las Cruces was another fluorspar operation, a non-Hayner mine. This one was on Tonuco Mountain and had several veins running for thousands of feet and ranging in width from a few inches to 20 feet. These deposits were near the surface and easy to get at. Kingsley Dunham, in his bulletin "The Geology of the Organ Mountains," stated in 1935 there wasn't much ore left. They had extracted most of the good stuff. Tonuco sits on the east side of the Rio Grande straight west of the Border Patrol station on I-25.

Another fluorspar mining area, a little farther afield, is the American Fluorspar group in Sulphur Canyon in the San Andres Mountains. It produced an excellent example of purple fluorspar cubes/crystals growing on a chunk of rock that is now on exhibit at the New Mexico Mineralogy Museum in Socorro. I escorted Dr. Virgil Lueth and his crew to the mine so they could collect a sample for the museum display and it turned into a keeper. Virgil is a bit of a legend to New Mexico mineralogy and has been associated with New Mexico Tech and the museum for years.

When you think of miners, you often picture dirty and scruffy men working hard. It looks like Frank Hayner was not that kind of miner. He owned several mining claims and hired others to do the work. Also, in the 1920s, I found newspaper stories about his construction company doing roadwork in the county and building various structures. He was part of an effort to bring a publishing company to Las Cruces. In addition he was manager of the Las Cruces Lumber Company. Also, he and his wife were involved in all kinds of social activities.

# Have You Heard Of The Lost Mesilla Valley Freight Train?

Recently, DACHS received a query about the location of a freight train swept into the Rio Grande north of Las Cruces at the beginning of the 20th century. Newly elected board member Chris Schurtz came up with a *Las Cruces Sun-News* article by Bud Rouse about the wreck that appeared in 1952.

The freight train with locomotive and 14 cars was coming south and was forced to stop because of a washout along the tracks near Radium Springs. The crew left the train to take shelter when a new surge of water came down the river from a storm and washed out the tracks. The whole train tumbled into the raging current - hard to imagine today.

The Santa Fe Railroad tried to recover the train afterward but it was buried in sand and they didn't have the equipment to extract it. Fast forward to 1952 after the river shifted and Simon Lucero,

when plowing his cotton field, discovered the train when his plow struck parts of the tender. In digging around the area, it looked like the tender was flipped over. They speculated that the locomotive was probably not far away. As far as anyone knows, no attempt was made in the 50s to dig it up. And most everyone agrees it is still out there under a field.

## Jan. 21 Talk On Cuban Revolution

Friends of Branigan Library present author Rosemary Matos discussing her book "Promises from Cuba", an authentic account of the difficult years during the Cuban Revolution, promises kept and ones unobtainable. Slides will illustrate her talk, and she will have copies of her book for sale. Friends' Author Talk series: Tuesday, January 21, at 1:30 p.m. in the Roadrunner Room of Branigan Library.

## Historical Society Dues Are Due - Please Lend Your Support

Members are reminded that dues for 2025 are due now. 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. Finally, you can fill out the short form below and mail it with your check to the DACHS PO Box shown on the header of this form. THANKS for your support.

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

**Annual Membership/Sponsorship Rates - attach your payment and mail to the above P.O. Box**

Individual \$25       Family \$30       Student \$10       Contributor \$40

Benefactor \$150       Life \$300

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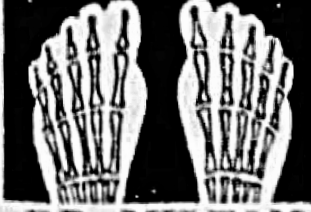
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If you are unsure of your status or have questions regarding membership, please contact Susan Krueger at 575 525-0654.

## The Back Page



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This is the first ad Jim Eckles found in his pursuit of Milton E. Noss, the man who claimed he found 450 tons of gold in Victorio Peak just north-east of Las Cruces. The ad was in the *Oklahoma News* in Oklahoma City in March 1933. It appears in Jim's article in the 2025 *Southern New Mexico Historical Review*.

"Doc" Noss first practiced being a chiroprapist in Oklahoma then moved to Texas where the law caught up with him. From there he came to New Mexico where he set up offices in towns down south like Carlsbad and Deming and up north in Grants, Las Vegas and Santa Fe.

Members will get their free copy of the Review at the Awards Banquet on January 25 at noon in the La Posta restaurant.

Image from Newspapers.com.

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