



# NEWSLETTER

May 2016

## NOTES FROM THE PRESIDENT’S DESK

Dr. Jon Hunner

Welcome to DACHS’s May Newsletter.

Our April lecture with Dr. Rick Hendricks (he is the N. M. State Historian) closely examined the history of the Bennett family, an important family in 19th Century Mesilla Valley. Our last lecture of the season with Sarah Stanley will explore the popular Chope’s Restaurant through the oral histories that she conducted of the four daughters who still operate this iconic eatery. She will talk on May 19th, as usual at the Good Sam auditorium—perhaps with dinner at Chope’s afterward? Then the DACHS will take a break over the summer. Look for our fall schedule of lectures soon.

I too will take a break after May. I will visit National Parks around the country to celebrate the NPS’s centenary and write a history of the U.S. from the places where that history happened. Follow me at [drivenbyhistory.blogspot.com](http://drivenbyhistory.blogspot.com).

It has been a real pleasure to work with the board of DACHS this year and to talk with you at our monthly meetings. We at DACHS will continue to assist with the preservation, interpretation, and presentation of the rich history and heritage of southern New Mexico. ■

### Mrs. Sarah Stanley’s short Biography

Sarah Stanley began her career studying Culinary Arts at the prestigious Culinary Institute of America in Hyde Park, NY. After graduating she went on to study Anthropology at New Mexico State University focusing on Culture and Food Studies. Her thesis explored the topics of food, gender and identity within Chope’s Restaurant and Bar located in La Mesa, New Mexico. She continues to pursue her passion of food and culture through workshops and lectures surrounding her thesis. As a PhD candidate in Educational Leadership and Policy Practice at University of Arizona, she will use her Culinary and Anthropology back-

**May 19 Membership Meeting to be held at the Good Samaritan Auditorium, 3011 Buena Vida Circle, Las Cruces.**



Sarah Stanley

Photo compliments of Sarah Stanley

ground to examine the effects of the National School Lunch Program on children and school leaders. Her professional background extends through food service operation, food safety, and training. ■

### History of Chope’s: Food, Family, and a Lantern

The late Jose “Chope” Benavidez and his wife Lupe successfully owned and operated Chope’s Bar and Café during their lifetime. Chope and Lupe inherited Chope’s from his mother Longina Benavidez. Longina prepared and sold red chile

**See Presentation on page 2**

## Presentation from page 1

enchiladas from her kitchen to the local farmers in the La Mesa community. Chope and Lupe successfully evolved the restaurant fare and the operations to encompass their entire home. Passing the restaurant onto their daughters, Amelia, Cecilia and Margie has continued the family food ways and traditions.

Today, Amelia, Cecilia, and Margie continue to honor their parents' wishes and run the restaurant with great success. The combination of Chope's tenacity in the public arena and Lupe's skill in the kitchen has made the restaurant an icon in the surrounding area. Not only is the restaurant seeped in generations of family and workers, the patrons are also multi-generational, which has created a unique and vibrant history. ■

### Old Timers Award

*This award identifies a cherished object, a natural phenomenon or a cultural tradition prominent in the heritage of the Mesilla Valley deserving of public attention and recognition as an important part of the physical character of this region.*

## 2016 Old Timers Award

### Prehistoric Trackways National Monument

This amazing site was discovered in the Robledo Mountains by Jerry MacDonald in June 1987. Some 230 million years ago, what is now Las Cruces was located near the equator with a tropical environment and was sometimes covered by an inland sea. The tracks of amphibians, reptiles and insects of all sizes, along with marine fossils and plant foliage, were captured in the red mudstone.

To conserve and promote this extraordinary natural resource, identified as one of the most significant finds in the world from the Permian period, the Prehistoric Trackways National Monument was established in 2009. It covers 5,280 acres on the west side of the Rio Grande.

Partnerships were an important part of developing the Trackways as an educational, scientific and recreational resource. Locally, BLM partnered with the Las Cruces and Gadsden Public School Districts, holding outdoor classroom programs. BLM also joined with NMSU's Geology Department to conduct field research. The guided day hikes offered to the public open up opportunities to better understand this unique prehistoric site and to enjoy its visual and scenic qualities - to glimpse into time predating the dinosaurs by 70 million years. ■

## SCHEDULE OF 2016 SPRING PROGRAMS

May 19: Sarah Stanley will present on the Chope family and heritage preservation through food.

All meetings of the Society are normally at 7:00pm on the third Thursday of the months of Feb. - May and Sept - Nov. in the Good Samaritan Auditorium at 3011 Buena Vida Circle.

## CALL FOR PAPERS

The Dona Ana County Historical Society is looking for original articles concerning Southern New Mexico history for its next annual Review (Volume XXIV, January 2017). Biography, local and family histories, oral history, student papers and articles focusing on the history of the Southwest and Northern Mexico will be considered. Small monetary awards are available for some pieces.

The editors prefer submissions electronically as Word or simple text documents. Other formats can be negotiated. To submit an article or to ask questions, contact Jim Eckles by email at [19dachs63@gmail.com](mailto:19dachs63@gmail.com) or by phone at 575-521-8771.

The deadline for final articles is October. ■



On the right, President Dr. Jon Hunner presents the Old Timers Award to Bill Childress representing the Prehistoric Trackways National Monument. Photo by Jim Eckles

## Hall of Fame Award

The Hall of Fame Award is designed to recognize an individual who is known for their exceptional contribution to the preservation of the history and culture of the Mesilla Valley. The contribution should be of a substantial nature and be evidenced by enduring and observable worth to the Doña Ana Historical Society and the community at large.

### 2016 Hall of Fame Inductee Doyle Piland

Currently Doyle serves on the DACHS Board of Directors as a Board Member at large. Also, he edits the Society's monthly Newsletter and he is the typographer for the *Southern New Mexico Historical Review* (SNMHR) published annually.

Further evidence of his enduring value to the Society came in 2014 when Doyle expanded the availability of Society material by converting all past issues of the SNMHR into searchable pdf files, making them available on the DACHS's website.

Beyond Doyle's work with the Society, his on-going contribution to the preservation of history and culture in the Mesilla Valley can be seen in his volunteer work at White Sands Missile Range. For the past 17 years, he has served both as a volunteer Archivist for the missile range's Museum and as a volunteer member of the White Sands Missile Range Historical Foundation, maintaining their website and other activities.



On the right, President Dr. Jon Hunner presents the Hall of Fame Award to Doyle Piland. Photo by Jim Eckles

Doyle's path to White Sands began about two years after he graduated from high school in Ava, Missouri when he joined the Army. Twenty-two years later, he retired having earned a B.S. in Electrical Engineering from NMSU along the way.

In 1980, Doyle was hired by White Sands as a civilian employee where he spent 17 years as an electronics engineer in research and development.

After forty years of active federal service, Doyle retired to Las Cruces and began his volunteer career at White Sands. ■

-----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 Past President, Susan Krueger, at 575-525-0654.

#### Annual Membership/Sponsorship Rates

Individual \$20  Family \$25  Student \$8  Contributor \$40  Benefactor \$150  Life \$300   
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Is this a change of information? Yes  No  A check for \$ \_\_\_\_\_ is enclosed. Date \_\_\_\_\_  
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How would you like to receive your copy of the *Southern New Mexico Historical Review* (SNMHR)?  
Printed Version  Society Website Version  PDF on CD Version



Above, Dr. Rick Hendricks (center) chats with members of the audience after his presentation on 21 April.

At our April 21<sup>st</sup> membership meeting, we were honored to have as our speaker, the New Mexico State Historian, Dr. Rick Hendricks. His presentation was about the Binational Bennett family who were

very active in government and commerce in the Mesilla Valley in the 19th and 20th century. The first of this family was Joseph F. Bennett who, like several citizens of the valley in that time frame, arrived here with the California Column during the civil war in 1862. After the war, many of the California Column mustered out of the Army and settled in the area

Dr. Hendricks took us through several generations of the Bennett family with members named Joseph F. Bennett and many marrying Mexican nationals and several of the family living and working in Mexico. He pointed out that although the Bennett family had multiple generations with a "Joseph F. Bennett," they did not use "Jr" or "I, II, III," or any thing to distinguish between those with the same name, so at times this was somewhat confusing when looking at history. ■

### Thanks to our 2016 Corporate Sponsors

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