



# NEWSLETTER

May 2010

Doña Ana County Historical Society

## President's Comments

By: George Hackler

The home of Jan and Mickey Clute won the DACHS award for a new building "adhering to regional architecture." After the award was given at the Banquet in January the Clutes sent a most kind and generous invitation to the members of the Doña Ana County Historical Society to come visit their award winning home in Mesilla. After some discussion on how best to accomplish this, Jan and Mickey suggested an open house.

And so it is, Jan and Mickey Clute invite you, the members of DACHS, to an open house, on Sunday, June 6<sup>th</sup> from 2 to 4 pm at their home in Mesilla at 2371 Calle de Parian. Their home is west of the Plaza and 1/2 block west of the post office on the south side of the street. Overflow parking is available at the Mesilla Community Center just north across the street from their house.

The Clutes have asked if you would please RSVP by calling George Hackler at 521-4458 and leave a message if you plan to attend the open house. Include the number of people coming so the Clutes can plan refreshments. ■

## GEORGE HACKLER a Short Biography

George Hackler is a native of Las Cruces, New Mexico in the Mesilla Valley of the Rio Grande. He graduated from New Mexico State University with a double major in physics and mathematics. His career included rocket flight determination, heavy construction, and designing and construction of rocket propulsion test facilities.

His interest in southwest history began at a very early age. His grandfather, Riburn Hackler was a Tennessee railroad engineer who wanted to be a cowboy and gave up a secure job to come west to Las Cruces in 1922. He cleared a farm out of the rough gravel hills on the west side of the river below Hatch. There was an Indian camp site and burial



George Hackler with two of his toys!!

ground above the farm on a bluff overlooking the river. There, as a child, he spent endless hours searching for arrow points and potsherds, trying to visualize the lives and times of the people buried there. His other grandfather, George Cross also came to the valley in 1922 where he worked on a steam driven dragline bigger than the boarding house he lived in. The dragline was used to channel the river and dig drain ditches; it was later used to dredge for gold at Golddust near Hillsboro. It

See George on Page 4

## May Meeting

Following the regular monthly meeting of the Doña Ana County Historical Society on May 20, 2010 at 7:00 pm, the program speaker will be our President, George Hackler. When asked for information about his presentation, he said; "*Just advertise that I'm going to take everyone for a ride in a Butterfield stagecoach across New Mexico.*" ■

**Last Call to Renew your Membership Form is on Page 3**

**Reminder: We do not publish a Newsletter for June, July, or August.**

## Calendar

Thursday, May 20, 2010 @ 7:00 pm  
George Hackler – **Mystery Topic (Stagecoaches?)**

June thru August - **No Meeting**

Thursday, September 16, 2010 @ 7:00 pm  
Mary Salopek - **History of Salopek family**

Thursday, October 21, 2010 @ 7:00 pm  
Martha Shipman Andrews – **Letters**

Thursday, November 18, 2010 @ 7:00 pm  
Ed Sweeny – **Apache Warfare**

December, 2010

**No Program**

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

## COLORFUL HISTORY

When the Spanish reached Mexico City (Tenochtitlan) in 1519 their prime goal was the search for fortune, fame and riches (gold) but they found a different treasure. A treasure worth more per unit weight than gold. They found leather bags of dried powder. Further investigation proved that the powder was the source of the flaming crimson colored garments, shields and body decorations the Aztecs displayed. The powder was the product of growing and harvesting a tiny insect that lived in colonies on prickly pear cactus. This tiny insect, the cochineal, tuned the juice of the cactus into a brilliant, rich crimson dye.

For three centuries the Spanish kept secret the source of the flaming crimson dye. The brilliant crimson replaced the royal purple of Europe. It was the color of cardinals and bishops robes and the dye for the British “Red Coats” uniforms.

The cochineal was known to the Indians of New Mexico. The dye was used to color cotton and wool garments and blankets.

The tiny insects can be seen in and around Las Cruces, hiding on prickly pear cactus pads under small white silk tents. The little insect does not tolerate cold winters and so the colonies around Good Samaritan come and go. The dye was used in cosmetics, food and medicines until the advent of cheap artificial colors.

From an article researched and written by Lynda Sánchez.

## 2010 Award Series

At the Annual Banquet held the 30th of January, the Society’s Awards Committee presented several awards. With this issue, we continue featuring some photos and the award stories for various people and/or places honored with awards.

### THE OLD TIMERS AWARD 2010

*Identifying a cherished object, natural phenomenon or cultural tradition prominent in the Mesilla Valley.*

#### “The Roadrunner” by artist Olin Calk



Holding watch over the Mesilla Valley from its perch at the West Mesa highway rest stop at mile marker 134, The Roadrunner is one of the most beloved works of public art in the area.

**Marcie Palmer presenting award to Olin Calk**

Constructed in 1992 by Olin Calk from an array of recycled materials, and standing 20 feet high and 40 feet long, The Roadrunner first greeted guests at the old city landfill before it closed. It was moved to the rest stop in May 2000.

### The Cotton Gins of the Mesilla Valley

Though cotton was grown in the Mesilla Valley in the 19th century, it was not until the Elephant Butte Dam was completed in 1916 that the mass production of cotton began. There were at one time more than a dozen cotton gins in the county. But by the 1960s, it started to become more difficult to grow cotton in New Mexico, and production began a slow decline. Today the Mesa Farmers Co-op Gin near Vado, which opened in 1991, is the only operating gin in the Mesilla Valley. The rest once-active gins, including the Harvey Gin, now stand as silent reminders of when cotton was king in the valley. ■



## BUILDING WORTHY OF PRESERVATION - 2010

*This award recognizes a home or building in Dona Ana County that is distinguished by its age and historical character, its historical significance, or that represents historical architectural character. The purpose of this award is to encourage an owner to preserve the uniqueness of the building, in the event that renovation or rehabilitation is being considered. Residential and commercial/industrial buildings in the county are eligible and owners may also nominate.*

### The Buildings of the Village of Dona Ana Historic District



The small village of Doña Ana is the oldest continuously inhabited community in southern New Mexico, founded along the centuries-old trade route *El Camino Real de Tierra Adentro* (The Royal Road to the Interior) around 1840 under the Doña Ana Land Grant.

Many of the modest adobe buildings still standing within the historic district of the village date roughly to the founding of the town, including Doña Ana County's first county clerk's office, the De La O Saloon, the Wertheim Store, and the recently-renovated Nuestra Señora de la Candelaria, the oldest church in southern New Mexico.

The layout of the old village reflects traditional Spanish standards, with the church built along the town plaza. Buildings were built close to the street and clustered for protection. Many of these adobes, though still standing, are showing various signs of their age, particularly cracking stucco, crumbling adobe walls, and deficient ceilings.

The village's historic district, roughly bounded by the Doña Ana lateral irrigation ditch, 1-25, NM 320 and Doña Ana School Road, was placed on the National Historic Register in 1996. ■



-----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 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 Treasurer, Xandy Church, at 526-9774 (May-Sept. 575-536-9728) or the President, George Hackler, at 521-4458.

### Annual Membership/Sponsorship Rates

Individual \$20  Family \$25  Student \$8  Contributor \$40  Benefactor \$150  Life \$300   
*Southern New Mexico Historical Review* Sponsorship \$50

**This is 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  No Preference

## George from Page 1

was from both grandfathers that he learned to harness and work draft horses and mules. It was during his stays on the farms and ranches that he learned what happens to a wagon when you turn a team too short and when a contrary mule steps over the tongue and tangles the traces. These experiences fueled his wonder and appreciation for the pioneers that opened transportation across the Far West. ■

## Program Presentaion

At the society's April 15 meeting, Lynda Sánchez gave a well received talk about the life and work of Eve Ball. This was a return engagement for Lynda, who was here last April and gave a great presentation on the History of Fort Stanton. ■



Lynda Sánchez ready for book signing after the April 15 presentation

The Society arranged a field trip to Fort Stanton in October hosted by Lynda who guided the group on a tour of the Fort.

Lynda's talk on Eve Ball was very interesting and informative. Eve Ball spent years doing oral histories with many Chiricahua Apache Indians after many years building trusting relations with them. Lynda worked for Eve and later worked with her, along with Nora Henn, as co-authors of the book titles "*INDEH: An Apache Odyssey*." The book gives the Indian's side of the war in the Southwest, their exile in Florida and Alabama, prisoners-of-war in Oklahoma, and their return home to New Mexico. ■

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The display of books, archival items, and artifacts brought by Lynda

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