



Socorro County Historical Society

Post Office Box 921
Socorro, New Mexico 87801

Membership News • Spring 2023

Printed periodically

SCHS is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization

SCHS Annual Meeting July 15, 2023 • 2:00 p.m. Cottonwood Charter School

The 2023 Annual Meeting of the Socorro County Historical Society will be held on Saturday, July 15, beginning at 2:00 p.m. The meeting will be in the multi-purpose room at the Cottonwood Charter School in Socorro.

The program consists of the public talk followed by the general membership business meeting. This includes a few brief reports on the status of the Society and election of officers. Light refreshments will also be served.

If you, or someone you know, would like to consider serving on the Board of Directors, please notify one of the Board members or nominated at the meeting.

The public talk is entitled “Pueblos to Statehood” presented by Paul Harden. The Power Point presentation is an interesting overview of the history of Socorro County from the Paleo- and Pueblo Indians, our first citizens, through Spanish contact, colonial history, the territorial period, and the years-long struggle to finally achieve statehood.

Continued on next page 

Your SCHS Board of Directors:

President	Chuck Zimmerly
Vice President	Claudette Gallegos
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Secretary	Paul Harden

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Plenty of history, interesting reading,
and gobs of photographs
on our website at:

www.socorro-history.org



The famous Venice canals have run dry. Droughts and increased water demands have caused rivers and reservoirs around the world to be at record low levels, or even completely dry. This has actually been a boom for archaeologists and amateur sleuths alike. The dry rivers and reservoirs have exposed many long lost historical features quickly being studied before water levels rise again. Some of these finds are on pages 6 and 7.

The presentation is intended to be an overview of Socorro County history. We have many new people in Socorro, coming here to live and work, plus our young people – many of whom may have a curiosity into our rich history that predates the Mayflower. It is a free public presentation, so feel free to invite anyone you think would enjoy the program.

AUTO TOURS

We have been asked by several when will we have our next auto tour to San Marcial or to the Valverde town site. We usually have these in early autumn with cooler temperatures.

However, we are also looking for volunteers willing to be trained as guides for this and other auto tours. If you would like to serve as an auto

tour guide, please inform Paul Harden at na5n@zianet.com. It is important to keep this “boots on the ground” history alive by passing the knowledge on to younger blood.

DUES

The Socorro County Historical Society had suspended membership dues over the past two years. Like most organizations, the pandemic health restrictions prevented us from holding events and activities.

The \$20/year dues have been reinstated for 2023 and can be paid at the July 15 Annual meeting or by mailing to SCHS at P.O. Box 921, Socorro, NM 87801. You can also pay online by debit/credit card at:

<https://socorro-history.org/>

SCHS 60 YEARS OLD (1963–2023)

The Socorro County Historical Society was formed in 1963, 60 years ago this year, by a few individuals wishing to preserve our local history. This was a rather informal group at first with the first President being Marjorie Bradbury. By 1968, with increasing interest and membership, then President Mrs. Buford Richardson proposed a more formal organization.

In 1969-1970, the Society reorganized for legal recognition with Helen Sickles elected as president. This required several documents, such as a Charter Statement and By-Laws to be drafted. The By-Laws were approved by the Board and membership in 1970, signed by Helen Sickles and Spencer Wilson, and recorded at the Socorro County Court House.

Articles of Incorporation were filed with the State of New Mexico in 1979 by Dr. Spencer Wilson to legally accept donations, such as a portion of the Joseph Smith photos from Emory Smith, Crown Mill items from the Greenwald family, and in preparation for receiving the Hammel Brewery property as a gift from Clarence Hammel.

The HAMMEL BREWERY building was bequeathed to SCHS upon the death of Clarence Hammel in 1986 to preserve one of New Mexico's last standing Territorial era breweries for future generations to enjoy. After some extensive renovations, it was opened to the public in 1987 and operated today by SCHS as a living and growing museum.

SCHS BY-LAWS

The SCHS By-Laws were drafted in 1970. Needless to say, they are over 50 years out of date. In 1970, there were no cell phones, websites, email or internet banking, upon which much of the Society’s business is now conducted. Plus, other archaic issues. As a result, a committee was formed in 2023 to review our By–Laws and bring them into the 21st Century.

- Some of the proposed changes include:
- 1) Change Annual Meeting from April or May to discretion of the Board.
First Board meeting each year is March; this leaves little time to arrange a meeting in April and May is graduation month.
- 2) Move membership renewal to the Annual Meeting.
- 3) Simplify membership classes to regular, Life Member, and honorary.
- 4) Reduce size of Board from 9 members to 7 with five members being a quorum.
- 5) Better define how Board members are elected and seated
- 6) Updated responsibilities of Board officers.
- 7) Allow electronic means for notification of members, newsletter, special Board meetings
- 8) Clarification on responsibility regarding online banking and other accepted electronic means for IRS, etc. reporting.

The final changes will be discussed at the Annual Meeting and approved by the membership in attendance.



MOVIE REVIEW

This may be the first ever movie review in an SCHS Newsletter. But, it does have a close and interesting connection to Socorro County since it was filmed in Polvadera (yes – Polvadera), and nearby Pueblito, Parida arroyo and the NMT campus.

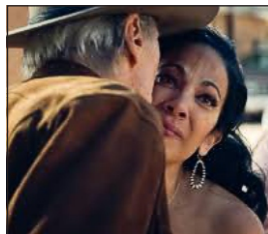
Clint Eastwood is considered one of the most enduring and successful actors and directors in Hollywood. It was the 1960s release of the *Fistful of Dollars* trilogy and *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly*, that established his popularity. He’s appeared in 48 movies with his latest the release of *Cry Macho*, which he starred and directed at 91 years of age.

The Plot

Eastwood, as an old, one-time rodeo star, is hired by a Texas rancher (Dwight Yoakam) to travel into Mexico to retrieve his son from his alcoholic ex-wife (Fernanda Urrejola). The teenaged son, Rafa, (Eduardo Minett) makes his living from crime and his rooster, named Macho, at back alley cock fights. That’s right, the movie is named after a chicken with no speaking role.

Somehow he convinces Rafa to return to his father in Texas. Rafa’s mother hires some henchmen to find the pair and return the son to her. Traveling through rural Mexico, the two encounters several run-ins with the hired goons and some Federalis. They finally arrived at the small village of Jañasco (Hon-YAS-co), hiding out in a small church for shelter. Local cantina owner Marta (Natalia Traven), helps the two with meals and keeps them hidden from the bad guys.

After several days, Eastwood seems to fall in love with 50-something Marta, 40 years his junior.



Dancing with Marta in the Cantina.

This makes him stick around for awhile enjoying Marta’s hospitality while pressed into service healing the town’s sick animals and breaking a few horses along the way.

Eastwood and Rafa finally leave and arrive at the border where the son is reunited with his father. But then, Eastwood turns around and returns to Jañasco to rejoin Marta. They are last seen dancing in tight embrace in the cantina, where it is implied they lived happily ever after. Suddenly, it’s a chick flick.



Clint Eastwood, 1964 in “A Fistful of Dollars”

Clint Eastwood, 2021 in “Cry Macho.”

Movie Review

I’ve never written a movie review before, so here goes. I enjoyed the movie, even though I found it one of the most boring and pointless movies I’ve ever seen. And with Clint Eastwood to boot. Enjoyable, only in seeing all the locations around Socorro and Polvadera where the movie was filmed. An embarrassment if you’ve enjoyed good ole Clint in the past. If I lived in Omaha, I’d want my money back.

In short, 91-year old Eastwood looked, walked and talked like a 91 year old man. No mistaking that. In spite of being chased all over the Mexican countryside by hired goons, he still acted like he was 91 for almost no “action” in the movie – not the western cowboy gunslinger or *Dirty Harry* we remember. They eluded the bad guys by hiding behind rocks and bushes. The producers claim the movie was about teaching the boy good values. I missed that point after they stole a car to continue their journey.

It was no doubt Eastwood’s last hurrah on the big screen. But, it seems there could have been a better plot and story to say goodbye to such a prolific actor. Others felt the same as movie attendance for *Cry Macho* was dismal. The movie has not yet fully recovered its \$33 million production cost. However, the showing was a packed house at Socorro’s Loma Theater, and like me, mostly entertained by the local scenery.

“Cry Macho” cont’d

The border to Mexico was the EMRTC gate on the NMT campus, the “M” on our mountain was obviously for “Mexico.”



EMRTC gate and M-Mountain

Mexico scenes were filmed in Bernalillo and Belen, where Eastwood has a run-in with the mother with an attempted seduction of him (remember, he’s 91 years old), tracks down the son at a cock fight and slithers into the night.

Soon they are being chased down the rural Mexican roads by the hired goons, obviously filmed around Pueblito and in the Parida arroyo near the Gordy’s Hill ATV area. The sequence with the Federal police was filmed in the bosque along the levy road.



Apprehended by the Federalis at the Polvadera levy and bosque

Living near Polvadera myself, the arrival of dozens of semi trucks and a throng of workers was hard to miss. The Location Director explained the town was called Jañasco, a made-up name, only cited once in the movie I heard.

Polvadera Rd. was closed for about two weeks from San Lorenzo church to south of Community Road. Trailers and tents were erected south of the church which served as workshops, staging areas, a kitchen and chow hall for the workers.



Photo: Craig Hennies

Dozens of people worked for over a week remodeling the Polvadera houses and buildings into the fictional village of Jañasco before the film crews arrived.



Movie screen grab

The church where Eastwood and Rafa hid out. It was built on Community Road and dismantled after filming.

The homes and buildings around the filming site were all converted to look like a poor Mexican village with signs identifying them as the “farmacia,” “mecanico,” and the “Fondira de la Luna” cantina. Some of those signs are still on the buildings. While residents were in somewhat of a “lockdown” during filming, they seemed to enjoy the excitement.

One interesting occurrence involved local resident Clifford Serna. While burning some weeds in the arroyo behind his house, several fire trucks and movie personnel quickly showed up to extinguish the flames. Turns out, they were actively filming and Eastwood didn’t like the smoke rising behind the cantina. Quickest uncalled response to a fire ever.

Polvadera got its 15-minutes of fame, but may remain a part of local history for much longer.



Photo: Craig Hennies

The old Polvadera mercantile store served as Marta’s “Fondira de la Luna,” including the internal scenes with Marta inside the cantina.



Photo: Craig Hennies



Photo: Craig Hennies

Here’s what it looks like when Hollywood redecorates your home. Several buildings and homes along Polvadera Road were made to look like various small town businesses. Signs were added to most of the buildings. Left photo is the *Carniceria* (butcher shop) and the town *mecanico* (mechanic) on the right.



Photo: Craig Hennies

Paletas are a Mexican fruity popsicle and usually sold out of a cart - located next to the *Zapateria* (shoe shop).



Photo: Craig Hennies

And what small town doesn’t have a pharmacy?



Movie screen grab



Photo: Craig Hennies

In the movie, 91-year old Eastwood helps break a horse and shows others how to care for one. The scene takes place at an apparent horse ranch – which in reality was simply the back side of the cantina building.

DROUGHT EXPOSES HISTORY

Reduced rain and snowfalls over the past few years has caused various stages of drought in the Great Southwest. But, not just New Mexico. Reduced rainfall and increased demands on freshwater supplies have caused drought conditions in Europe and many other areas across our planet. These drying reservoirs, lakes and rivers have revealed a host of interesting historical finds.



TEXAS: A large set of dinosaur footprints were exposed recently near Ft. Worth, TX when the Paluxy river, a tributary to the Brazos river, ran dry. The tracks belong to the sauropod, a seven-ton 15-foot tall carnivorous dino. It has become somewhat a tourist attraction until water once again flows in the river.



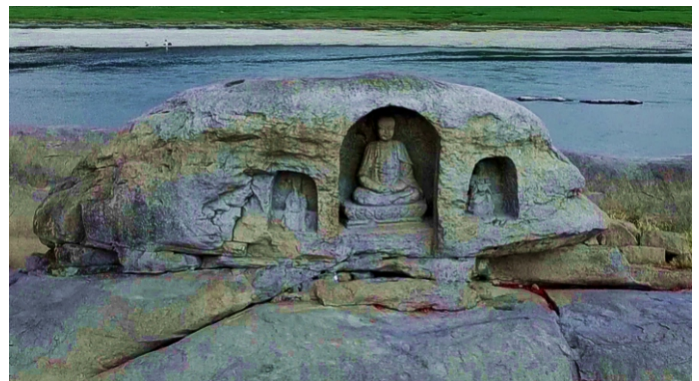
EUROPE: Large stones with ancient engravings have been exposed in low waters along the Elbe river in Germany and the Czech Republic. While dates in the 1600s are clearly visible, other markings suggest ages back to the 1400s. "If you see me, then weep" is inscribed on one, seemingly predicting a future drought.



SPAIN: The once submerged village of Aceredo reemerged after drought drained a dam and reservoir. Submerged by the dam in 1992, it has become a tourist attraction to walk the streets and explore the buildings of the old town.



IRAQ : Drought has caused extreme low levels in the Tigris river in Iraq, exposing a sprawling 3,400-year-old city. The site is hurriedly being excavated before water levels rise, revealing cuneiform tablets from around 1350 B.C. and other ancient artifacts.



CHINA: The Yangtze river is another giving up its hidden treasures due to their drought. Low river levels have so far exposed three ancient Buddhist statues. They are believed to have been built during the Ming dynasty 600 years ago. Thousands of such statues are in China, but located in rivers are rare.



SERBIA: Dozens of WWII boats and ships are now exposed along miles of the Danube river. The vessels were among hundreds scuttled by the Nazi Black Sea Fleet in 1944 fleeing the advancing Soviet forces. Filled with ammunition and bombs has made them hazardous to river travel and the nearby villages.



LAKE MEAD: This lake dropped to 20% of normal (though now rising again) threatening the generators at Hoover Dam, water for Las Vegas, and irrigation. It has also exposed 90 years of secrets from sunken boats and cars to skeletal remains. And just like in the Mafia movies, a body stuffed into a barrel. What more secrets will the lake reveal as the drought continues?



MISSISSIPPI RIVER: Yes, America's largest river was also at historic low levels, revealing scores of historic sunken ships, piers, docks, old bridges and lost river cargo. Some had become navigational hazards during the shallow river depths.



ENGLAND: Many rivers and reservoirs in England are also running nearly dry from their drought. Low levels on the River Ryburn has exposed an old stone packhorse bridge next to the modern day bridge. A few structures from a nearby ancient Norse village have also been exposed.

SPAIN: This 11th century Roman church is a popular landmark in a lake and reservoir near Seville, Spain. The top of its tower has stuck out of the water for decades being well photographed by tourists. The drought in northern Spain has dropped water levels to extreme low levels, now exposing all of the ancient church.



SWITZERLAND:

Several glaciers in the high Alps have receded due to the European drought and abnormally low snowfalls. This has exposed several airplane wrecks that have gone missing for years. The photo shows a recently discovered plane wreck from 1968 that still contained two bodies on the Chessjen glacier. Several wrecks emerged on the nearby Aletsch glacier, one containing the bodies of three brothers. Their plane went missing in 1926.



RIO GRANDE: There are no reports of ancient villages, pueblos, Roman churches or Viking artifacts emerging from the Rio Grande in Socorro County during the low river winter water levels.



Boots-on-the-Ground History in Socorro County, NM



There's gobs of history in Socorro County to go see and enjoy from days gone by from Socorro's old buildings to Fort Craig. You can even explore further to visit the Kelly Mine or the ruins at San Marcial. However, there is a lot of history in the form of old abandoned ranches, buildings, homesteads and other structures that are well off the beaten path. Often it takes a 4-wheel drive vehicle and negotiating off-road trails to find them.

Finding these old historical sites are interesting, but also heartbreaking. These structures are the result of years of blood, sweat and tears by the families that built them. It was their beloved home or

business, yet, for a host of reasons, they were eventually forced to abandon them for a better life elsewhere. The stories behind most of these sites are lost to time. If only those old walls could talk.

It has been an interest of mine, and others, to find these old abandoned ruins. Most are not shown on maps. Sometimes it takes all day, if not several days, to finally find them. Some are on private property and visited with the land owners permission. Some are just found by luck and serendipity.

Following are some photos of some of the few rather remote abandoned ruins found over the years and a little identification where known.

First, a few familiar places . . .

All photos by Paul Harden



Fort Craig was abandoned 140 years ago, yet many of her stubborn walls and structures still stand. The fort is open to the public with a self-guided walking tour loop.



The Kelly Mine with its distinctive headframe and remnants of the Tri-Bullion smelter is one of the most visited old mining sites in the state.



The School House and nearby church are the two well known features in the ghost town of Santa Rita, or Riley. The town was abandoned in the 1950s.



Old Polvadera Post Office (1881-1898). Located on the east side Frontage Road at Sarracino Road. You've probably driven by it. Note the mail bins built into the walls.

Some more hidden gems.

All photos by Paul Harden



Valverde Catholic church and the Valverde town site was destroyed by a Rio Grande flood in 1937. Only scant remnants of the town can be seen. Portions of one of the walls is all the remains of the church.



Valverde School welcomes the very infrequent visitor. The school was under construction when the flood struck in 1937. With the town abandoned after the flood, the school was never completed.



Eva Hilton Lewis Ranch on Bosquecito Road. This ranch was purchased by Conrad Hilton as a gift to his sister, Eva, as a wedding gift. She lived on the ranch in the 1920s.



Ojo de la Parida ranch is a nice homestead consisting of a well built stone house and a nearby rock reservoir for water storage. It is located many miles up the Parida arroyo and south of the Johnson Hill road, though hard to see.



Old Bruton Ranch with the rising full moon. The ranch was ordered abandoned in 1945 for the Trinity Test, and has been deserted since. Located 29 miles south of US380 on the Fite Ranch road.



Fraley kilns are located near Carthage on US-380 and produced limestone flux for area smelters 1884-1899. Site is accessed after a mile or so hike, not accessible by auto.

Some not so familiar places . . .

All photos by Paul Harden



AT&SF Section Houses were built by the railroad to house the track crews maintaining the railroad. Located on the Armendaris Ranch at the "Lava Siding." There are very few Section Houses still standing in New Mexico.



Lava Camp is a "line camp" built by the Diamond A ranch (now Armendaris Ranch). Line camps were outposts for the cowboys working the cattle many miles from the ranch headquarters.



Santillanes ranch homestead is located east of the river. Water came from a hand dug well with old corrals still standing. Long abandoned. You drive past this homestead many miles along the Johnson Hill road.



Guano mine at the remote bat caves on the Jornada del Muerto. Guano was mined early 1900s for fertilizer to the pineapple fields in Hawaii. Remnants of the mine and housing for the workers made of lava rock still stand.



Nuñez family homestead is located east of the Santa Rita (Riley) church and school. There are several crumbling homes and an old store east of the church missed by most visitors, plus the small Protestant cemetery.



Old Red Hill Merchantile Store. Red Hill is a locale you've probably seen on U.S. 60 west of Quemado in today's Catron county, though the actual ghost town is about a mile north of the highway.

The Face of the Neolithic Man



What did early Neolithic man, living 10,000 years ago, look like? Recently, several different disciplines got together in an attempt to answer this question.

Near Jericho on the West Bank archaeologists found several skulls encapsulated in plaster as a ceremonial practice. These “Jericho skulls” were 9,500 years old, but can not be studied without removing the ancient plaster, a destructive procedure. Recently, anthropologists from the British Museum used a new non-invasive scanning technique to peer inside the plaster masks for a 3-D model of the skull and facial features.

A forensic specialist was hired using techniques for reconstructing the faces of crime victims. The result is a very pleasing appearing individual, quite in contrast to the images of the crude monkey-faced neanderthals seen in most books and movies. But ... curly hair?



New look for the “Stone Age” man

Deadly Gardening

Here’s a spring gardening idea for you. The Dutchess of Northumberland decided to make a very unique kind of garden at her home, the Alnwick castle (pronounced Annick) near Scotland. Her garden is now 14 acres in size and contains 100 of the world’s most poisonous plants. Just sniffing or touching these plants can cause nasty rashes, breathing difficulties, kidney failure – even death. Though macabre, the poison gardens now attracts over 600,000 tourists a year, escorted through the locked gates after receiving safety training. From hemlock to plants that emit cyanide gas, what could go wrong?

The Alnwick castle is also famous as the filming location of Hogwarts in the Harry Potter movies.



Chaco Canyon Lumber

New Mexico’s Chaco canyon pueblo complex is one of the world’s premier cultural sites, and one of the most researched. It was built and occupied for about 400 years, from 850 through 1250 A.D. Though excavated and studied since 1896, Chaco canyon still holds many mysteries. One of those mysteries is where did the nearly 200,000 pieces of lumber used to build the pueblo great houses come from with no nearby forests?



New technology in biochemical analysis and dendrochronology (tree ring dating) has recently helped answer where the Chaco wood came from. This has used instruments to identify chemicals, elements and isotopes in the wood and compare them to soils in the region with the same characteristics. Where the two match is where the trees came from. This has identified that about two-thirds of the lumber was harvested from the Chuska mountains along the New Mexico-Arizona border, about 60-70 miles west from Chaco canyon. However, some of the lumber was identified as being harvested from the west side of the **San Mateo Mountains**, 150 miles south of Chaco. Most of the lumber were trees 15 to 20 feet long and weighing 200 pounds or more. How they were transported such long distances from the Chuska and San Mateo forests to Chaco canyon is the next mystery to solve.