



Socorro County Historical Society

Post Office Box 921
Socorro, New Mexico 87801

Membership News • Summer 2023

Printed periodically

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

OKTOBERFEST

Saturday, October 7, 2023

The **SCHS Board of Directors** has been working hard planning another great Oktoberfest. It's a tradition started by the Hammel family over a century ago, and a tradition we are proud to continue.

In spite of our relatively dry monsoons, you should have seen the 5-foot high weeds in the wintergarten area. That annual task of clearing the jungle has been completed, thanks to Board member Donna Voelker who provided this year's weed cleanup crew. The far rear of the Hammel property is largely unused. The Board is hoping to convert some of that space into a parking area by next year to alleviate the parking problems. A work party on October 2 will give the Hammel building and restroom a good cleanup as well. Plenty of "behind the scenes" work is always needed.

We have another great line-up of music, entertainment and food. See the Oktoberfest flyer on the next page for details. We are always grateful (and humbled) by the community support we receive. All the entertainment and musical groups volunteer their time and talents to SCHS, Oktoberfest, and the community.

The NM Environment Department no longer has an office in Socorro, making getting our required food service and health permits very difficult. Gary Jaramillo has a licensed commercial kitchen in Socorro and has volunteered to prepare all the food and provide the permits – another life saver we are extremely grateful for. All food will be prepared and cooked in his commercial kitchen, though the brats will still be cooked on the grill. This has also helped keep our meal costs at a reasonable \$10/plate.

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Your SCHS Board of Directors:

President	Chuck Zimmerly
Vice President	Claudette Gallegos
Treasurer	Prescilla Mauldin
Secretary	Paul Harden

Board Members:

Jon Spargo	Roy Heatwole
Donna Voelker	

Bob Eveleth – Past President Ex-officio

Bodega will again be our brewmeister with an Oktoberfest brew on tap, and for the first time, a selection of wines. Prescilla Mauldin has ordered beer glasses with the authentic pre-Prohibition Hammel Brewery logo. These are glass etched for longer durability.

The City of Socorro has also become very supportive of Oktoberfest with various logistic support. They see how Oktoberfest has long been a well attended Socorro event and suitable for the entire family. As such, they have ensured Socorro Fest will be a separate activity to no longer interfere with our "first Saturday in October" event.

So we hope to see you all on October 7th for another enjoyable Oktoberfest.

OKTOBERFEST

Saturday, Oct. 7th, 2023

Hammel Brewery & Museum (behind NAPA), 601 N. 6th Street, Socorro, N.M.



FOOD FROM THE GRILL

Served 11 a.m. - 3 p.m.

Your Choice of -

- Traditional beer brats & sauerkraut meal, or
- Pulled beef brisket and baked beans meal

\$10

PER MEAL

Prepared by Gary Jaramillo's kitchen includes drink, condiments and country bread pudding desert

O'FEST BEER

\$6⁰⁰

PER GLASS



**Last
Call
3:00
p.m.**

The Bodega brewmeisters will be serving an Oktoberfest Brew & choice of wine

Historic beer glass - etched with pre-Prohibition Hammel logo - \$10. A real authentic souvenir

PLUS ... Socorro Garden Club, Socorro Train Gang model railroad displays, tour the old brewery, photos & video of historic Socorro 1940-1960s, and visit with your neighbors and friends.



MUSIC AND DANCE

FREE ADMISSION



FUN



for the whole family



11:00-11:30 a.m.

Socorro's Et Alia

Belly Dancers

For Oktoberfest??? You bet!

11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

Dr. Comstock's

The Oompah Band

Official, authentic, and authorized Bavarian Oktoberfest tunes

12:30 -1:30 p.m.

The Sax Quartet

Enjoyable music with "sax appeal"

1:30-2:30 p.m.

Ever popular music at it's best

Roon Band

2:30-3:30 p.m.

Gary Jaramillo & Friends

Favorite local New Mexico music

Thanks to all for your support • Oktoberfest sponsored by your friendly

SOCORRO COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Bohemians in Socorro

Old 1905-1906 newspapers, from the Socorro Chieftain to the Santa Fe New Mexican, were filled with fanfare about a group of Bohemians with ambitious plans to establish a colony in Socorro. It was to be the basis of one of my monthly history articles in the Defensor-Chieftain. However, articles on this project just stopped, and of course, Socorro has no Bohemian colony. For those reasons, my research hit a dead-end and the article unfinished.

Recently, I was contacted by Martin Nekola, doing research on Czechs and Bohemians in New Mexico, who helped fill in a few holes and some of my research suddenly made sense. It's an interesting chapter in Socorro history scarcely known.

— Paul Harden

In August and September 1905, New Mexico Territory was visited by a successful Chicago businessman named Max Kirchman. Exploring areas around Taos and Santa Fe to Silver City, he was looking for a suitable location to establish a colony for his fellow Bohemians. He selected Socorro along the Rio Grande as the most promising location. The last days of September was spent looking for parcels of land in which to purchase for his colony and fields.

The news broke on October 7, 1905 in the Socorro Chieftain newspaper with the headline "Bohemian Colony to Socorro." The lengthy article introduced Kirchman and his plans, stating, "I selected Socorro, rich in minerals and fertile land, picturesque ... with great people." Kirchman said he issued "an eloquent and stirring invitation to his Bohemian brethren to come to Socorro area to relocate."

The Chieftain published more news the following week, including the reveal that Kirchman's enterprise had \$1 million (\$31 million today) to invest locally for the colony. Homes would be built for the arriving families, develop a reliable water system, to building stores and a hotel. He also anticipated 400-500 Bohemian families, living and farming around Chicago, were eager to move "out west."

Socorro in 1905 was an economically depressed community. The 1893 silver crash closed the mines on Socorro Peak. The smelters were closed. The Santa Fe Railroad chose San Marcial for its southwest headquarters over Socorro. Floods in the 1890s destroyed portions of the town and many acres of farm land. The town's population had dwindled from

2,500 during the "boom years" to about 1,500 by the 1900 census. At this time, Socorro, Kelly and San Marcial were all about the same size, sporting a population of about 1,200-1,500. Socorro was challenged to keep her standing as the County Seat.

Any news was good news for Socorro in 1905. The promise of 500 new families and \$1 million in local investment was a dream come true, indeed.

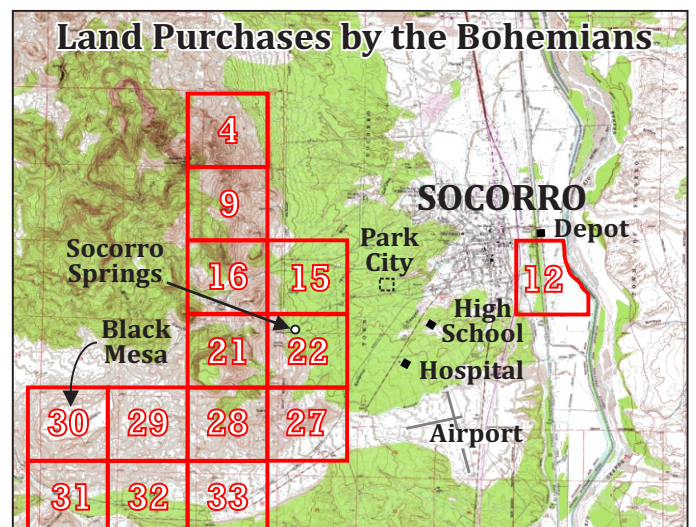
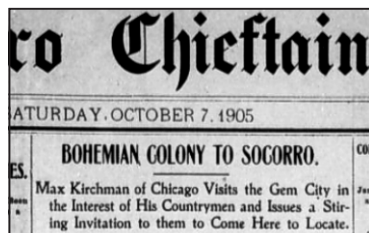
Bohemians Purchase Land

In October, Mr. Kirchman formed the Bohemian-American Association and approached the Socorro City Council with a proposal to purchase a large part of "unoccupied lands in the Socorro land grant at a fair price." City leaders and the Chieftain touted this as an incredible opportunity for Socorro. Claims of 500 new families would double the size of Socorro.

The enthusiasm generated by Kirchman and the Socorro Chieftain must have worked, for on October 25, the City Council issued a proclamation approving the sale of several hundred acres "west of the city" within the Socorro Land Grant, though no purchase price or the exact acreage was reported.

The Bohemian holdings were defined as plats of land in sections 4, 9, 15, 16, 21, 22, 27-33, and nearly all of section 12 along the Rio Grande. This included abandoned mining areas on Socorro Peak, vacant property around Socorro Springs, near the Evergreen Ranch, and atop Black Mesa west of town.

The map below shows the locations of the sections with land transferred to the Bohemian project. No matter how you look at it, it was a major land grab.



By November, articles about the Socorro Bohemian Colony began appearing in newspapers from El Paso to Santa Fe. The Chieftain was receiving letters inquiring about the colony or land for sale, fueling the optimism of Socorroans.

Kirchman kept the Socorro Chieftain busy with new plans and information almost weekly. Several thousand dollars would soon be spent on artesian water wells, the reason land was purchased near Socorro and Cook springs. If unsuccessful, a pumping station would be built on the river on his section 12 property to irrigate his proposed fields.

E. A. Drake, editor of the Socorro Chieftain wrote, *"It will be readily seen that this means much help for the city. In fact, the Gem City now has a good prospect of recovering from the disastrous effects which resulted from the closing of the Rio Grande smelter several years ago."*

A photo of Kirchman was published in the December 30, 1905 issue of the Socorro Chieftain. It was announced that he had recently moved to Socorro, accompanied by his son, Richard. His son had just enrolled at the School of Mines. Max Kirchman was a widower.



Only known photo of Max Kirchman in Socorro. It was derived from microfilm archive of the 1905 Socorro Chieftains.

In the same issue, Kirchman published his Articles of Incorporation. The Territory granted the certificate to sell common stocks. He changed the name of his venture to the American-Bohemian Association.

On January 8, 1906, stockholders held their first annual meeting, electing the following to the Board of Directors:

- Max Kirchman (General Manager)
- John Greenwald (owner, Crown Mill)
- Jos. E. Smith (Pharmacists/photographer)
- Wm. G. Hammel (owner, Hammel Brewery)
- F.J. Sisteck (Chicago businessman)
- Robert Pitte (Chicago businessman)
- Alexander Purer (Chicago businessman)

Bohemian Plans Announced

Following the stockholder's annual meeting, Kirchman revealed his complete plans in the January 15th, 1906 Chieftain. Plans include to irrigate 7,000 acres of land west of Socorro, build homes for the new settlers, build a brick plant for construction materials, a hotel, hospital, a flour mill, a brewery and ice plant. As the colony expands, other businesses will be added.

It would seem that many of Socorro's prominent business owners would have lost some of their enthusiasm over Kirchman's announced plans. Why would they welcome such blatant competition to existing businesses with a million dollar bankroll in economically depressed Socorro?

For example, Board member John Greenwald, owner of the Crown mill, is one of the largest mills in the Territory. Why would he welcome a competing flour mill? Or, Board member William Hammel of the St. Louis Brewery and ice house, delivering cold beer by railroad to the Southwest for years. Would he want a local competitor? Likely not. If there was growing decent, it was not reported in the Chieftain, Kirchman's main promoter.

Who Are the Bohemians?

At this point, it is natural to ask, "So who in the world were the Bohemians?" They are centuries old people living in Czechoslovakia and southern Germany (Bavaria), centered around Prague. They are a group of ethnic people. Most are Czech citizens. They were considered "free spirited" independent people who lived a simple life, usually together in colonies. They were a hard-working people with an unconventional lifestyle allowing them to "break the mold" by developing novel farming and building techniques superior to their surrounding Czech and German neighbors. In the 1800s, they used their excellent water and crops of hops and grains to develop the Pilsner style of beer, still a popular brew. By 1905, 200,000 Bohemians had emigrated to the United States.

Bohemia still exists today in the western Czech Republic and surrounding areas, a region called the Bohemian Highlands. They remain popular for their beers, vineyards, and excellent wines.

Bohemian also became a culture of sorts. In a time of fancy dress and glitter, Bohemian women were known for their simple, long plain dresses, sometimes embroidered. Art and music, with a simple life was the Bohemian signature.

The Bohemian way peaked in the United States in the 1920s with their characteristic dress, simple life, and building styles, such as the popular bungalow. Then, it seemed to slowly die. A resurgence came in the 1960s thanks to singer Janis Joplin with her wardrobe



Typical Bohemian dress 1900-1920s (L) re-popularized by Janis Joplin in the 1960s as a "hippy dress." (R)

that popularized a short Bohemian dress with bell bottom pants or leggings. That became the official "hippie dress" for many women in the 1960s. Janis Joplin certainly had an unconventional life and singing style. I guess that made her a Bohemian.

Excursion Train

In April 1906, Kirchman announced plans had been finalized with the Santa Fe Railroad to bring a special excursion train from Chicago to Socorro in early May. This will bring prospective settlers to the area. Kirchman and Chieftain editor Drake asks the people of Socorro *“to greet these visitors with welcome and kindness for their reception and settlements.”*

On May 5, the special excursion train pulled into the Socorro depot with plenty of fanfare, even including a greeting from Territorial Governor Herbert Hagerman. Those who came were escorted around to see the recently purchased Bohemian lands, the proposed fields, home building sites, and meet those friendly Socorroans.

However, the Chieftain reported, *“The number of Bohemians that arrived in Socorro yesterday and this morning did not meet expectations.”* Kirchner explained the disappointment that *“the season was not favorable for farmers to leave their fields during the May planting season (in Illinois).”* He promised another excursion in the fall. (Isn't that harvest time?)

Others expressed concerns that areas “out west” might experience a repeat of the deadly San Francisco earthquake catastrophe just two weeks earlier. On this later point, Kirchman might have been correct.

Shaking Developments

San Francisco was struck with its devastating earthquake on April 18. In 1906, news was now quickly relayed across the country by telegraph, such that within hours, the “Telegraphic News” of the earthquake had spread from coast-to-coast. A couple days later, photos of the quake damage and fires were delivered by rail to the nation's newspapers. In 1906, printing photos in newspapers was a new technology become common practice.

The San Francisco quake was devastating news to the country, reporting 700 deaths from the quake and fires. However, amateur sleuths over the years have cataloged local obituaries and family histories



Bohemian farm house with German influence



The popular bungalow was based on this low profile Bohemian home style

revealing over 2,500 deaths and many missing.

Then on July 2, 1906, an earthquake struck Socorro causing minor damage. This was followed on July 12 and 16 with two stronger quakes that caused collapsed walls, tumbling chimneys, and other damage in Socorro. Then on November 15, an earthquake now estimated at 6-6.5 on the Richter scale struck Socorro, remaining the largest recorded earthquake in New Mexico. This was followed by a swarm of smaller quakes for about a year.

Like San Francisco, news of the Socorro quakes buzzed along the telegraph lines across the country. In many cases, these news stories were

greatly exaggerated as to the amount of damage and deaths (there were none) in Socorro. Yes, there was fake news in 1906!

Little was known about earthquakes in 1906. No seismographs or why earthquakes occur existed. The San Francisco and Socorro quakes were believed related at that time. To many Americans, the west was simply shaking apart and killing people.

The 1906 events initiated a serious scientific study of earthquakes. A seismograph design was standardized to accurately measure the intensity and damage of tremors, forming an early network. In 1912, the theory was submitted describing “continental drift” as the cause. The now used Richter Scale was proposed in 1935 as a measure of earthquake intensity and anticipated damage. After several decades of monitoring quakes, the tectonic plate theory was developed, based on colliding underground land masses in slow collision causing these geologic disturbances. It was not until the 1960s that the plate tectonic theory and fault zones were fully accepted.

The previously mentioned Bohemian researcher, Martin Nekola, provided documentation that the western quakes truly spooked many of the Bohemians considering a move to Socorro. And not just New Mexico. Railroad records show a decline in passenger traffic traveling west and tourism declines were noted by the Harvey Houses to the Grand Canyon for about two years, all blamed on the San Francisco and Socorro earthquakes.

Back to 1906

There was a four month period of silence following the excursion train disappointment. Then on August 4, Kirchman sent a letter to the Chieftain to explain plans are still ongoing for Socorro. His Chicago architect has completed the plans for his 60-room hotel and 40-room sanitarium (hospital), promised to be a modern up-to-date structure, including electric lighting and phones. This hotel was obviously never built. The Valverde Hotel, built in 1919, was the first Socorro hotel to offer these modern conveniences.

Two weeks later, Aug. 18, Kirchman announced that after being a widower since 1901, he had remarried in Pittsburg. He and his new wife would be arriving shortly to make Socorro their home.

In September, the Socorro Chieftain reported that Kirchman had purchased the Park Hotel from G. W. Frenger. Upon arriving in Socorro with his new wife, he announced he had shifted his focus to building his brick plant in order to construct his hotel and other ventures.

Then – **absolute silence** – on the Bohemian Colony project. Not a further word is mention in the Socorro Chieftain newspaper after September 1906.

So – What Happened?

Was the Bohemian Colony a scam? Was Max Kirchman just a promoter and not a businessman? Why did the ambitious Bohemian Colony plans crash-and-burn so suddenly?



A typical small Bohemian vineyard and farm with green rolling hills and fertile fields in the western region of today's Czech Republic.

As previously explained, the 1906 San Francisco and Socorro earthquakes certainly played a factor. Many people were truly fearful of traveling to the western states and territories for fear of getting caught in the next deadly earthquake. And, Socorro was the epicenter of some of those quakes.

Socorro Chieftain editor E. A. Drake spent many printed words over a year helping to promote Kirchman's plans and what he no

doubt honestly felt was also promoting Socorro. Perhaps his silence in explaining the demise of the Bohemian project was just out of embarrassment for his zealous support.

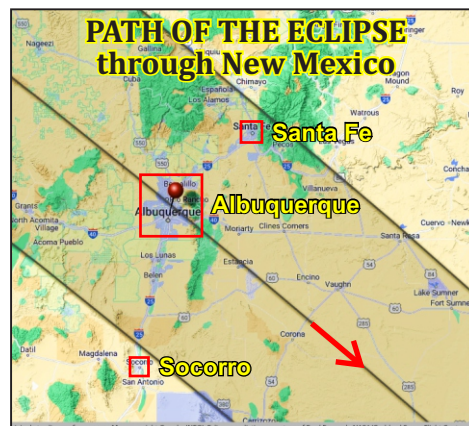
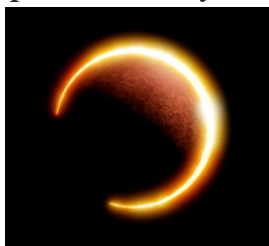
However, perhaps the true reason is New Mexico just did not fulfill the expectations of the Bohemians. These were honest people who traveled from central Europe with green rolling hills and fertile fields to settle in Illinois and other areas, also with good farm lands. Those that visited Socorro did not find green rolling hills with fertile fields. The Southwest desert was just too bleak for their expectations. It would be a herculean effort to convert the land that Kirchman purchased into workable fields of their liking and prosperity. In short – they did not find any enchantment in the Land of Enchantment.

It was a grand plan that Kirchman realized simply wouldn't work with no intent to defraud Socorro. A shame really. If a couple dozen Bohemian families had moved to the area, Socorro might have a slightly different flavor today. With their Czech and Bavarian blood, just think of the Oktoberfests we would have! Another unfinished chapter in Socorro's history.

SOLAR ECLIPSE IN SOCORRO — OCTOBER 14th

See: https://nationaleclipse.com/cities/albuquerque_new_mexico.html

A rare annular solar eclipse will be visible in Socorro on Oct. 14 from about 9 am until a bit after noon. An annular eclipse means the moon will appear slightly smaller than the sun to produce a "ring of fire" eclipse rather than total blockage of the sun. Still, it will be an impressive sight for Socorroans. The path of totality will pass directly through Albuquerque during the Balloon Fiesta for an added thrill to attendees. The path just skims Socorro to the north for 93% blockage of the sun. In Socorro, maximum blockage will appear as shown in the photo from 10:34-10:39 am. Be careful and use all precautions looking at the sun.



The Star Wars Starfighter



Most everyone has seen the “Star Wars” movie, released in 1977. And, probably remember Luke Skywalker, in his X-wing Starfighter, with the luckiest shot in the universe that destroyed the death star. The detailed model of the Starfighter was made by Greg Jein, a special effects model maker for many movies. The model was believed lost when the studios moved from San Fernando to the Bay area. Jein died in 2022. As family began to clean out his garage, a world treasure of movie props were found tucked away in boxes. This included the Starfighter and models built by Jein for other movies such as Bat Man and Star Trek. Even the NCC-1701 Enterprise ship models used in the Star Trek TV shows were built by Jein – and found in his garage.

Jein’s garage-finds will be auctioned in October. Opening bid on the X-wing Starfighter model lists at \$400,000. Jein said there was little interest following filming to save these relics. He kept them, not for their value, but because they were pieces of art and made by artists worthy of preservation.

NEW MEXICO URBAN LEGENDS

An urban legend is a story about an unusual event that many people believe to be true, usually with little or no proof. Often based on second hand tales and stories passed by word-of-mouth.

La Llorona is a centuries old tale of a woman who drowns her children in the Rio Grande to earn the love of her man. She roams the river at night looking for children to kidnap or to drown by another version. It is a popular story in Hispanic lore meant to keep small children from playing in the river. Every year, people claim to see the ghost of La Llorona along the river or hear her weeping cries in the bosque.

Big Foot or Sasquatch sightings seem to be everywhere, and New Mexico is no exception. Even in recent years, the big furry creature has reportedly been seen in various areas. The Valles Caldera seems to be one hot spot. In 2011, a group of investigators claim to have video of a 7-foot tall creature walking across the caldera floor, then slithering into the trees.

Dulce, NM is another strong urban legend based on a secret alien base built underneath Archuleta Mesa. Books, TV shows and documentaries have been made about this underground base supposedly operated by humans and aliens known as the “greys.” They are breeding new human-alien hybrid creatures according to the stories, the reason for the numerous cattle mutilations reported in the area.

Prehistoric Vultures, known as teratorns, are giant birds long extinct. However, there have been sightings reported between Lordsburg and Las Cruces, and in the Organ Mountains into Texas, since the 1800s of this giant bird.

The Taos Hum seems to have been a real phenomenon. Many people heard it in the 1990s. However, it has taken on a life of its own as proof of secret underground government tunnels connecting to secret bases for some secret reason. The tunnel probably goes to Dulce.

Skinwalkers is a legend strong in the Navajo, Hopi and Ute cultures, though sightings have been reported by non-native people as well. They are ancients who can transform into various animals, such as wolves or birds. They seem to cause little harm other than inciting strong fear, often to keep people away from sacred sites and burial grounds.

Iron Door Mine was located on Socorro Peak in Blue Canyon. First mined by the Spaniards, it contained copious amounts of nearly pure silver. The missing silver altar from San Miguel church came from this mine. It was sealed with an iron door during the 1680 Pueblo Revolt. But, the miners never returned. Around 1690 an earthquake caused falling rock to bury the iron door entrance. Folks have searched for the legendary mine ever since, though today, you’ll be nabbed by EMRTC security.

San Marcial Bank is buried under the silt from the 1929 flood with \$150,000 in the safe waiting to be found. At least in legend. Many have dug looking for the bank. It is well documented the money was sent to El Paso before the floodwaters hit. Still, the legend of buried money persists.

There’s a grain of truth somewhere in such legends.