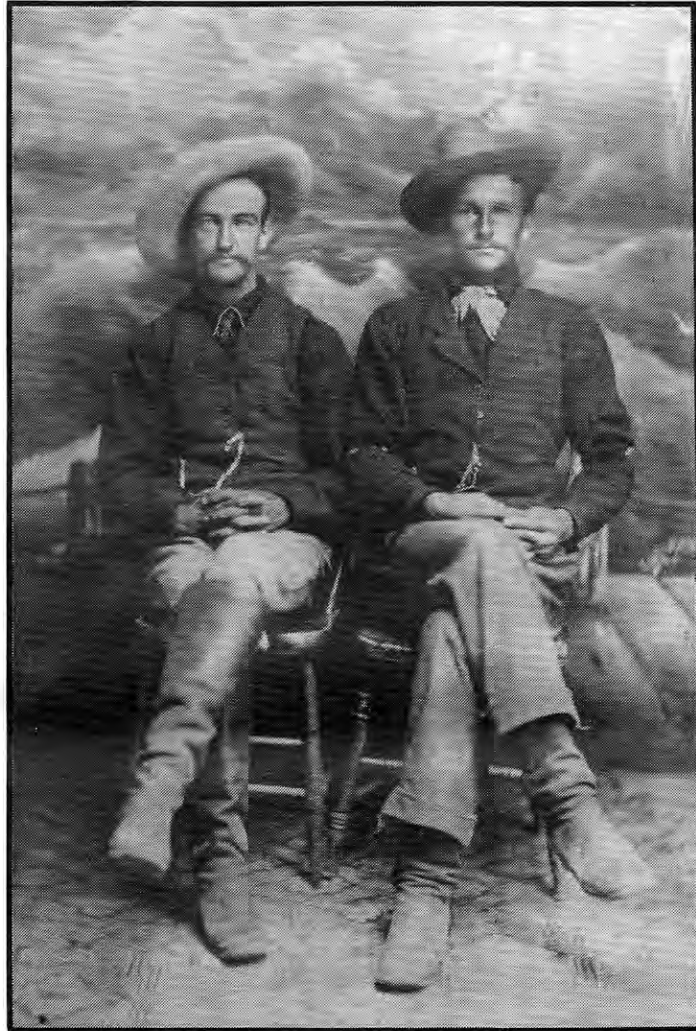


# **AYER Y HOY en Taos**

**Yesterday and Today in Taos County and  
Northern New Mexico**



**THE AMERICAN VALLEY MURDERS**  
*by Victor Westphall* **page 3**

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FALL 1989

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## EDITOR'S PAGE by David L. Caffey

THIS EDITOR first met Dr. Victor Westphall in the summer of 1970. He was then toiling in solitude, atop a grassy knoll in the beautiful Moreno Valley. Around him were the beginnings of the Vietnam Veterans Chapel--now DAV Vietnam Memorial--and from the looks of things, it was going to take a long time for one man to bring the project to completion.

It did take a long time, but the man did not give up. To be sure, there were some few who were willing to help, but for quite a while, Dr. Westphall's determination was the main thing the memorial had going for it. Most of us wanted to forget about Vietnam as fast as possible, but Dr. Westphall could not forget, because the war had taken a son from him. His grief gave way not to bitterness, but to a motivation to remember those who had sacrificed, whether others were then ready to do so or not.

The federal government, several states, and other organizations have since taken steps to recognize and remember the veterans who served and died in that tragic war, the Disabled American Veterans have assumed sponsorship of the chapel at Angel Fire, and hundreds if not thousands now flock to the Moreno Valley to remember loved ones on Memorial Day; but Victor Westphall's long struggle to complete and secure the future of the memorial remains a shining example of what one person can do.

\* \* \*

There are other sides to the man, too, of course. He is a champion age-level cyclist, for one thing, and on many a morning he can be seen pedalling along the road through the valley.

But through everything else, Dr. Westphall has remained an eminent historian, continuing the research and writing that made him a respected figure in the field long ago. Dr. Westphall has written about the public domain in New Mexico, and about the *Mercedes Reales*, the old Spanish and Mexican land grants so critical to an understanding of New Mexico. He is the preeminent biographer of Thomas Benton Catron, and he is a past president of the Historical Society of New Mexico.

It is a pleasure to have Dr. Westphall's account of the American Valley Murders as the featured article in *Ayer y Hoy*. In this case the history is not exactly of the North, but there's no doubt the historian is.

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Cover: ALEXIS GROSSETETE AND ROBERT ELSINGER, victims of the American Valley Murders. Photographer unknown. Courtesy Victor Westphall.

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### AYER Y HOY en Taos Yesterday and Today in Taos County and Northern New Mexico

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## THE AMERICAN VALLEY MURDERS

by Victor Westphall

AT THE FOOT OF THE SOUTHERN SLOPE of Gallo Mountain in central western New Mexico, just north of the ruins of a stone house at Gallo Spring, is the unmarked common grave of Alexis Grosstete and Robert Elsinger.

These young settlers were murdered at the base of a big pine tree on a wooded trail near a steeply walled ravine. They had gone to borrow a plow from a neighbor. Upon their return, they were waylaid by six horsemen who ordered them to follow this isolated trail for their rendezvous with death. One of the partners was shot in the back four times; the other twice. According to local legend, each of the assassins fired a single shot so that all would be equally guilty.

This double murder was one of the most famous crimes in the history of Territorial New Mexico. Even today, these murders are officially unsolved. The slain men were newcomers to New Mexico and known only to a few. They stood recklessly in the path of a growing empire during the time of the cattle ranching boom of the early 1880s and paid for their brashness with their lives. This is the story of their murders and of the trials that followed.

It is also the story of the ranching country where the victims lived, a story of their neighbors, friends and foes, as well as the intrigues and passions resulting in their deaths.

In a broader sense, their story is related chronologically to a decisive era in American history. These were stirring times during which the last frontiers of the American West were pushed back until they vanished.

It was on these frontiers in the development of the American West that cattle raising became a new bonanza. Livestock journals and other publications pointed out the large profits that could be made. An investment of \$5,000, it was said, would net the investor a profit of as much as \$50,000 within a few years. A calf worth \$5 could be matured on the grass of the public domain at little cost

and sold for up to \$50<sup>1</sup>

Central western New Mexico was a natural region for the development of this new industry; however, until its scattered settlement by pioneers in the 1870s, it was seldom seen by human beings. Large scale cattle graziers arrived in the area from the south soon after several early settlers.

Gallo Mountain presented a formidable barrier for further expansion into central western New Mexico from the south. The earliest pioneer cattleman north of Gallo Mountain was John P. Casey, a tall, aggressive man from Albuquerque. Casey brought his herds to the region in March of 1881 and established his ranch headquarters at the forks of Largo Creek.<sup>2</sup> He had reconnoitered the region the previous autumn. He noted that the area was unsurpassed in its natural advantages for raising cattle, named his haven American Valley, and set about carving out his cattle kingdom. He called his ranch the American Valley (Cattle) Company.



*View looking north from the Grosstete house toward Gallo Mountain. In-text photos by the author.*

The area that Casey had hoped to encompass in his empire comprised about 66 miles from north to south and 72 miles from east to west. This included the northern slope of Gallo Mountain.

In those days, it was axiomatic that whoever controlled water for cattle, controlled the surrounding land for as far as cattle could travel to water. Henry M. Atkinson, the surveyor general of New Mexico, helped John P. Casey control the land in the American Valley with water on it by means of illegal filings.

At the base of the southern slope of that mountain is located Gallo Spring, 24 miles north of present day Reserve, and nestled at the northern end of a broad valley reaching



south from the mountain's base.

The stage was set for drama and tragedy in December 1881 when Alexis Grossetete and Robert Elsinger moved in at Gallo Spring across the mountain from John P. Casey's budding empire.

In May 1882, John P. Casey, his brother James, and a small party of horsemen visited Grossetete and Elsinger. The visitors accused the partners of squatting on land that Casey had paid to have surveyed. The partners, however, knew that their pre-emption rights were valid, and they were not intimidated. They wanted this spot for their own home, and refused John P. Casey's tardy offer to purchase their pre-emptions rights.

Greed was rampant as Casey developed his holdings. His unprincipled ambition was characterized by an expression of the time: "All he wants is what joins him." The modest homestead of Grossetete and Elsinger joined him. Casey and his associates amassed whatever they could by any means to make their property as lucrative as possible for a prospective sale. In the end, they would even condone murder to gain more.

But in a larger sense, Casey was merely reflecting the tenor of the times. The violent crucible of the Civil War invited a hard and unrelenting way of life among those who moved westward after the war. Thomas Benton Catron said: "Nobody has any friends out here. Everyone looks after himself."<sup>3</sup>

This was the era of the Robber Barons and "Boss" Tweed. During the presidency of Ulysses S. Grant, and the word *ring* was a natural product of the times. Rings were formed for various purposes. Some operated boldly as conspiratorial organizations bent on gain at any cost. Others existed largely in the imaginations of persons or organizations who needed a cudgel to take up against an opposition. Then there were so-called rings which more accurately represented individuals or groups whose economic and political interests happened to conflict with those of other combinations. They would hardly have been aware of their alleged association without reminders from the opposition. It was to this class of entity that the "Santa Fe Ring" most accurately belonged. Ring members were frequently more motivated by economic factors than political implications; what is more, law firms frequently encompassed both political parties. This dual relationship, more than anything else, explains the enigma of the Santa Fe Ring. It was composed of individuals whose constantly changing, but common interests brought them together from time to time. Thoroughly democratic in its way, in all of its incomprehensible ramifications, it was baffling for those who wanted to lash out at something they could not comprehend.<sup>4</sup>

The Republican Party in Territorial New Mexico was born in the winter of 1867, and with it the epithet "Santa Fe Ring,"

which was applied to the party's leaders.<sup>5</sup> From the beginning, T.B. Catron was the acknowledged head of both party and ring. This was so largely because he was willing to work harder than his contemporaries. People came to him repeatedly for leadership because of his willingness to pay the price in money and effort to attain mutually desired economic and political goals.

What is more, his business career in New Mexico combined all types of land acquisitions there. It is well to understand how the emphasis in classes of land procurement shifted over a period of years following the Civil War.

This was the heyday of the Homestead Act of 1862 in much of the nation. In New Mexico, however, large Spanish and Mexican land grants "were a riper plum and more sought after for immediate picking."<sup>6</sup> Cash secured land cheaply in money-hungry New Mexico.<sup>7</sup> Then, too, grants were largely on the periphery of settlements and were comparatively free from Indian depredations. The Civil War brought to the Territory a new breed of enterprising and resourceful entrepreneurs. Their aim was not a meager quarter-section homestead; rather, they saw an opportunity for rapid and profitable gains in these large grants, so traffic in them became a pivotal factor in much of New Mexico's business. The arrival of railroad transportation modified this emphasis.

During the Gilded Age of American commercial venturing, land grant promoters characteristically were blind to the risks involved in developing these grants; consequently, they generally did not share in the prosperity brought by railroad transportation. Then, too, land grants were becoming distrusted because the procrastination of the Federal government in adjudicating them made their titles questionable.

The decade of the 1880s saw the expansion of railroads in New Mexico and a boom in land entries as well as use of the public domain for grazing cattle. As a consequence, competition for grazing rights made it imperative to acquire title to land--particularly to land controlling water. Suddenly the public domain was an increasingly more lucrative commodity for personal gain.

Far more land was needed for the open range cattle industry than could be legally acquired. "The consequence was an epidemic of fraudulent manipulation of the Homestead Act and other land laws."<sup>8</sup>

Since there were far more entries made than there were eligible entrants, it follows that the entries were illegal. Fraudulent acquisition of titles to land was common throughout the Territory.

This prototype of fraud and deception mirrored more violent patterns of crime which were rampant in much of New Mexico. The rapid expansion there of the open range cattle industry from Texas brought the usual lawless element common to frontier areas. This criminal ilk was mixed with law-abiding

citizens who sought only to make a living, but were caught up in the turmoil. The resulting heterogeneous mixture of good and bad is well illustrated on the various frontiers of the Territory. Vast hiding grounds were to be found in sparsely populated areas; consequently, there were few arrests and fewer convictions. People feared to present information, so even indictments were hard to obtain. Jurors hesitated to convict, frequently for fear of reprisal.

Heightening this tendency toward lawlessness on the American frontier was an anomaly generally referred to as the Code of the West.<sup>9</sup> An unwritten, but widely accepted law held that killing was allowable providing it was done in a fair fight. No holds were barred in a fist fight. Knives were somewhat more lethal, but the supreme equalizer was the Colt 45. A Winchester rifle or carbine was the usual implement for longer range mayhem. If one pushed, one expected to be pushed back. Going armed was common. The code demanded that a real or fancied wrong be redressed on the spot. Thus, personal fortitude and reckless disregard of life were commonly required human traits.

Artificial courage was regularly imbibed in the form of ever present whiskey. Drinking to excess was an established practice, and made the drinkers quarrelsome. Accordingly, the code was abetted, and a casual attitude toward death was tragically encouraged.

It was in this violent era that the young settlers, Grossetete and Elsinger, had the temerity to defy determined empire builders who coveted their land. They paid for their land with their lives.

The men later accused of murdering Alexis Grossetete and Robert Elsinger gathered together at the home ranch of the American Valley Company at Rito. By May 1, 1883, Daniel H. McAllister, recently fired as ranch manager, and James Casey, brother of John P. Casey, were there. Wednesday, May 2 witnessed the arrival from Fort Wingate of Mueller Scott, the ex-buffalo hunter, and newly hired ranch manager. Three others arrived from Socorro on Saturday morning, May 5. James McIntyre, a U.S. Marshal, and James Courtright, the former town-taming marshal from Fort Worth, had recently hired out their guns to the American Valley Company.

W.C. Moore claimed an interest in that company, but had not yet completed his payment. Moore, James Casey and McAllister were old hands at the ranch, while Scott, McIntyre and Courtright were newcomers.<sup>10</sup> Space does not permit relating the account of their journey over Gallo Mountain to the scene of the murder.

In the days just passed, James Casey had spent some time examining the country about the Grossetete home, so Moore asked him if he could direct them to a place that would intercept the road from the Grossetete house to the Manuel Romero ranch. Casey replied that he could, and led the way on a route that skirted the Grossetete place. Soon

they struck a wagon trail, leading to the southwest, upon which were the fresh tracks of a wagon pulled by two horses. This trail passed along the bottom of broad, shallow Gallo Canyon until it narrowed and deepened as it approached the Romero ranch.

The men followed the tracks until they were about a mile from Romero's. At this point, they saw Grossetete and Elsinger approaching in a wagon. As they surrounded the wagon, they trained their weapons on the partners, who were returning with the plow they had borrowed from Romero.

Moore hollered: "Hold up your hands."

Alexis and Robert wordlessly obeyed, since they had been taken completely by surprise. James Casey dismounted and took Grossetete's pistol and Elsinger's rifle. "Take off that belt and hand it to me," he said, pointing his pistol at Elsinger.

While Casey buckled the belt around his own waist, Moore ordered the prisoners: "Unhitch the team and throw the breeching forward." As they complied, he added: "Now get on."

"I know it's funny, but what are we being arrested for?" Alexis asked, his fine features humorless.

"You'll find out soon enough," Moore sardonically replied.



*Approximate location of the capture of Grossetete and Elsinger by the murder party.*

Marshal McIntyre stated that he had a warrant for their arrest, but he did not show it. Moore cut the conversation short with orders for Alexis and Robert to precede the party back along the trail toward the Grossetete house. About a mile and a half from where they had left the wagon, they approached a dim trail leading off to the left. McAllister and Casey were in the lead and started to pass this trail when Moore



angrily demanded: "Here, God damn you, where are you going?"<sup>11</sup>

McAllister replied: "Aren't we going home?"

"No, take that trail to the left," Moore commanded impatiently.

The trail Moore indicated followed an arroyo out of Gallo Canyon to the northwest.<sup>12</sup>

Soon they came to a fork in the arroyo and took a route to the north up a gentle slope between the branches of the arroyo. Within half a mile from where they left the road to Romero's, they came to a steeply-walled ravine that ran toward the northeast. They were now about three miles southwest from the Grossetete house.<sup>13</sup>

McAllister and James Casey were still in the lead, following the captives. As they hesitated momentarily at the brink of the ravine, Moore called out: "This is far enough."

He pulled his pistol as he spoke and rode up behind Grossetete, who was following Elsinger. Moore then held the muzzle of the pistol behind Grossetete's left ear and pulled the trigger. The bullet came out from Grossetete's right eye and his lifeless body slid from his horse to land face down in the dirt. Elsinger jerked his mount into flight and started along the edge of the ravine to the northeast. The horse had taken only a few strides when four rifle shots rang out and Elsinger was struck by four bullets, three in the small of his back and one just below the shoulder blades. His lifeless body balanced crazily on the running horse for a moment, then slid off and rolled to a stop at the foot of a big pine tree, not more than 30 yards from that of his partner.



*The steep-walled, rocky ravine where Grossetete and Elsinger were probably murdered.*

The shots were those of James Casey, Scott, McIntyre and Courtright. McAllister had held

his fire and now five pairs of hostile eyes reminded him of Moore's previous order that all were to shoot and thus be equally guilty. With a helpless shrug, he pulled his pistol and delivered a shot into Grossetete's lifeless form. The bullet passed through his left arm and into his body.<sup>14</sup>

James Casey, who was carrying Elsinger's rifle, had had to drop the weapon to make his shot and now let it lay where it was later found near the bodies. He later disposed of Grossetete's pistol. It was never found, but he did not have it on him when he returned to Harry's cabin. Elsinger's belt was still around his waist, over his own, and he left it there as he quickly spurred his horse to the north along a route that would take him and his associates in crime to the west of the Grossetete Ranch and back to the trail over Gallo Mountain.<sup>15</sup>

The party quickly rode to the west of the Grossetete Ranch and over the mountain.

Back at the Grossetete house, Sunday, May 6, Alexis and Robert had not returned as planned. A little later, when the family heard a volley of shots from the direction they knew the partners had taken, they were surprised and somewhat alarmed. As the afternoon waned, they became desperately anxious.<sup>16</sup>

Somehow the night passed. Monday morning, May 7, Fred, age 13, accepted his responsibility as the eldest male left in the household by setting out to look for the missing men. He found the two black mares standing only a short distance from the house with the harness still on their backs and the lines dragging.

Again, in the interest of space, we must delete details of the search for the bodies.

Thursday morning, May 10, the people at the Grossetete house found Juan Peralta, who was still herding sheep in the vicinity. He agreed to direct the searchers while his companion, Ramon Gonzales, remained with the flock. The search party consisted of Peralta, Higgins, Mann, Gilmore, Sullivan, Brandon and Clotilde. Some rode horses while the rest brought the wagon.

They started west and saw the tracks of six horses. The tracks were going north, but Peralta directed them south for half a mile until the backtracks led to the corpse he and Gonzales had discovered. It was Elsinger and he lay where he had rolled, under a big pine tree, with four bullet holes in his back. His rifle was found nearby, but his belt was missing. Otherwise, he was attired as when he left the ranch on Sunday morning.

The corpse was badly decomposed and smelled as only rotting, dead flesh can. Grossetete was not immediately found. Finally Clotilde detected another odor and, with this horrible guidance, was directed to Alexis' body where it rested some 30 yards west and south from that of his partner. She fell on her knees beside her first-born child, and her tears mixed with the powder burn that she wiped at

on his left ear. Then she gently removed the silk neckerchief. It would be her most precious possession for the rest of her life.

Some of the searchers sorrowfully led her away from the scene while the others examined the men. After noting the locations of the fatal wounds, they wrapped the two friends in blankets brought along for the purpose, since it had been suspected they would be needed.

After loading the bodies into the wagon, they departed for home and dug a single grave north of the house. With quiet reverence, but with the efficiency born of necessity on the frontier, shortly after noon, they laid Alexis Grossetete and Robert Elsinger to rest in a common grave--partners to the end.



*Remains of the stone house built by Alexis Grossetete and Robert Elsinger.*

The murderers had hoped that the slaying of Grossetete and Elsinger would be blamed on rustlers or Indians. When it became evident that this was not going to happen, they arrested other persons and accused them of the murders. They then brought the prisoners to Albuquerque for a hearing before the grand jury. Here the concoction of the murderers began to unravel.

The worm had started to turn, and Daniel H. McAllister saw it happening. He went to the District Attorney and explained that he had been with the murder party of six men, but that he had been sent away and did not actually witness the killings. He became the chief prosecution witness in the two trials that followed.

On May 25, Mueller Scott and James Casey were taken into custody as a result of warrants issued upon information charging them with murder in the first degree. Moore, McIntyre and Courtright had eluded law officers and left the Territory.

The worm had now completely turned.

Following the first trial, newspaper reporters attempting to learn how the jurors had voted in the case, concluded from the most reliable source that they had stood 11 to 1 in favor of conviction. Oral tradition indicates that the dissenting juror had been bought for only a few dollars.

At the conclusion of the second trial, the jury could well believe that Casey and Scott were guilty; on the other hand, there was little doubt that McAllister had perjured himself.

On October 25, 1883, the jury informed Judge Joseph Bell that they could not agree. Witnesses became scattered, so the case was never tried again and remains officially unsolved. The feeling endures, however, that a disagreement in the jury for the first trial had been secured by the use of money and that justice had not prevailed.<sup>17</sup>

The American Valley Company, as incorporated, was comprised of 12,000 acres of patented land controlling the water and range to the extent of between two and three million acres of land. "The ranch company controlled most of the water in several townships, the idea being by absolutely controlling the water right thus to command the range adjoining; but the plan was never fully carried out."<sup>18</sup>

The company did not prosper. The importance of controlling natural sources of water lessened as windmills came into vogue and artificial tanks were constructed for the storage of water; furthermore, the company was harassed by litigation clear into the next century. But that is another story.

W.C. Moore never returned to New Mexico. He was last heard of in Alaska, where it is reported that he was killed in a drunken brawl.<sup>19</sup>

James McIntyre appeared before the district court in Albuquerque on October 15, 1885, and the indictment against him was dismissed when the prosecution produced no witnesses.<sup>20</sup>

James Courtright returned to Fort Worth, Texas, where he operated a private detective agency. He never returned to New Mexico to stand trial, for on February 8, 1887, he was killed at Fort Worth by Luke Short, a notorious gambler.<sup>21</sup>

Several of the witnesses in the trial of James Casey and Mueller Scott for the murder of Alexis Grossetete and Robert Elsinger later came upon substantial trouble of their own. John W. Sullivan and Frank Hoagland served five-year sentences in the penitentiary at Santa Fe for stealing stock. D.L. Gilmore stole some horses at Laguna Pueblo and took them to Colorado where, after killing two men, he was captured and lynched.

Hank Andrews was arrested by Deputy Sheriff Patrick Higgins at Horse Springs in February 1884, on a charge of cattle and horse stealing. Higgins was escorting his prisoner to Socorro when a group of masked men relieved him of his charge and hanged Andrews to the nearest tree.



Daniel H. McAllister was divorced in April 1884. He faced indictments in Albuquerque on several charges and, in the late summer of that year, returned to Salt Lake City, accompanied by his son. Matthew Drya, who was also eluding officers for various crimes, ran off with the former Mrs. McAllister and left her in a house of ill fame in Chicago.<sup>22</sup>

Thus closes this chapter in the real life history of the West. The American Valley murders remain officially unsolved.

#### NOTES

1. Dan Elbert Clark, *The West in American History*, p. 596.

2. *Albuquerque Daily Democrat*, April 30, 1882; *Albuquerque Morning Journal*, October 18, 1883. The ranch headquarters presently at this location is owned by Mrs. Tommie Calley, who also owns the deeded land along the Largo known as El Caso Ranch. This is undoubtedly a corruption of Casey's ranch, as shown on the original survey plat for T.2S, R16W. J. Evetts Haley, *Jeff Milton: A Good Man With a Gun*, passim; Mrs. Ellen Salmon to the author, April 15, 1964 and September 16, 1964.

3. Victor Westphall, *Thomas Benton Catron and His Era*, p. 19.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 201, 202.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 97.

6. Victor Westphall, *The Public Domain in New Mexico*, p. 49.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 50.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 100.

9. Robert M. Utley, *High Noon in Lincoln*, p. 20.

10. *Albuquerque Morning Journal*, October 12, 1883. Personal interview, Nellie Landon, January 22, 1960. John P. Casey, notarized statement, October 15, 1892. This is an unsigned copy of the typewritten original and is in the possession of Mrs. Myrtle Cox, Quemado, New Mexico. The original was not found. The copy bears the name of L.W. Lenoir as a notary public, but the copy is not signed by Lenoir.

According to notes taken by Mr. Adlai Feather of Mesilla Park, from the *Las Cruces Independent* (supplied to the author September 26, 1963) Lenoir was editor of the *Independent*. John P. Casey and John P. Casey, Jr., had come to Las Cruces from Socorro and the latter was a candidate, in 1892, for county superintendent of schools on the Democratic ticket opposing Samuel Sherfey. There were numerous party defections in the campaign including the Caseys, who had been Republicans in Socorro County. It is reported that John P. Casey, Jr., was the only Democrat to lose in the election.

The Casey statement concerns, in part, how Thomas Benton Catron became interested in

the American Valley Company and was undoubtedly written to hamper Catron in his candidacy for Territorial delegate from New Mexico at the time. Catron was aware of Casey's activities against him and threatened to prosecute Casey if the statement were publicly released. Catron to W.L. Rynerson, September 22, 1892 (C.P. 105, Vol. 5).

*Black Range*. June 21, 1889, charges that John P. Casey left the American Valley to escape Judge Lynch.

11. By means of distances given in newspaper accounts of the trial testimony, the author was able to locate this trail, which today follows the same general course as a logging road.

12. It was here that McAllister, in the trials that followed, claimed Moore ordered him to leave the party. There is evidence that he perjured himself in this regard, and it is here assumed that he continued on with the rest. The following account of how the murders most likely happened is based on trial testimony concerning such factors as the number and location of the bullet wounds in the victims, placement of the bodies when found, and accounts of the persons who discovered the bodies.

13. Points of evidence concerning the actual murder vary widely, and the story is here presented as it would seem most likely to have happened.

14. Personal interview, Adela Cook.

15. It was at this point that McAllister claimed to have rejoined the party and his testimony figures in the account following.

16. Sources for the search and burial of the bodies are the *Albuquerque Morning Journal* and the *Albuquerque Daily Democrat*.

17. *Black Range*, June 5, 1885. The editor concluded: "Who can wonder that lynch law is so often availed of to mete out justice."

18. Charles H. Elmendorf to John D. Patterson, October 20, 1899 (C.P. 601, Vol. 1).

19. N. Howard (Jack) Thorp, *Partner of the Wind*, 156. Moore was also reported in Canada, Governor's Papers, Miguel A. Otero. Letters from Otero to George W. Hall and from Hall to Otero. State Records Center, Santa Fe.

20. *Albuquerque Morning Journal*, October 16, 1885.

21. Howard Bryan, *Off the Beaten Path*, February 23, 1959.

22. *Albuquerque Daily Democrat*, October 15, 1885. United States, *Territorial District Court Records*, Albuquerque (Chambers Record). Chancery for divorce, Rhoda, M.Y. McAllister vz. Daniel H. McAllister, April 12, 1884. Letter from Lauritz G. Petersen to the author, September 26, 1963. The son (Daniel H.Y. McAllister) was baptized in 1888, set apart on a mission to Great Britain on May 26, 1899, returned July 9, 1901, and took up residence in Provo, Utah.



## BOOK REVIEWS

*I Returned and Saw Under the Sun: Padre Martinez of Taos.* E.A. Mares. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1989.

IN THE BOOK, *I Returned and Saw Under the Sun*, Padre Antonio Jose Martinez returns and answers the charges of his critics. The book is a play consisting of a dialogue by Padre Martinez. The book is another good example of contributing to the needed revision of history that has been undertaken recently to set the record straight on the historical legacy of Padre Martinez.

Using a combination of documented historical research and the fictional technique of theatrical drama, Mares weaves a very cerebral and believable account of what Padre Martinez thought and believed in his time and would probably espouse today in his defense. As a historical, Dr. Mares is very concerned with maintaining historical accuracy, and in this he succeeds.

The part that Mares fictionalizes in the script is benign, as overall the play does offer a balanced perspective of Padre Martinez which is all that anyone should expect. One example of this is that he does not take a cut and dried position on the allegations that Padre Martinez fathered illegitimate children.

In a sense Mares humanizes Padre Martinez by impersonating him. On first impression this may appear disrespectful to a person many consider a folk hero, but in the end it makes one realize that Padre Martinez was in fact a man and a mortal capable of mistakes.

Dr. Mares is to be commended for offering the presentation in a bilingual format. It certainly added to the overall meaning, and in some cases it is more meaningful in Spanish. This presumption is evident in the phrases, ". . . la vida is sueno. Y los suenos suenos son," as opposed to "life is a dream, and dreams are only dreams."

In gist, to discover a balanced historical perspective and enjoyable reading, anyone--and particularly anyone who has read *Death Comes for the Archbishop*--should put *I Returned and Saw Under the Sun* on their reading list.

Bob Romero  
Taos

*Philmont: An Illustrated History.* Stephen Zimmer and Larry Walker. Irving, Texas: Boy Scouts of America, 1988. Pp. 160, color/b&w illus., biblio.

TO JUDGE FROM THIS BOOK, Waite Phillips was a generous man. He laid the foundations for a magnificent national summer camp and adult leadership training program which attracts over 18,000 participants each year, making it "the world's largest camping organization."

He gave his 127,000 acre Cimarron ranch, one of the largest chunks of the old Maxwell Grant, to the Boy Scouts of America in 1938 and 1941. Other gifts of money, buildings, and land make Philmont a prosperous 214 acre spread. Phillips was motivated by patriotism and apparently, by the desire to give back to society a part of the great wealth he had earned in the business world.

This is an interesting story to me as one of more than half a million persons who has been there either as a camper or on staff. Its interest to others will be more limited. There are moments of Philmont trivia--such as learning the name of the ranch manager in 1940--which could have been better conveyed in a list rather than the text.

The thing which bothers me about this book is the utter lack of passion, drama, and comedy--those things which make Philmont such a vital and demanding place. While not exactly dour, the book could have used anecdotes to complement the factual stuff. I recall in 1974 how a young married couple on staff stationed at a backwoods mountain camp caused BSA officials much worry for what effect their out-in-the-open relationship might have on the young male campers! The BSA is a very conservative organization.

This lack of emotion is odd because the authors are clearly devoted to Philmont. They do at least mention that a trek through those mountains is not uncommonly a life changing experience for the young person (sometimes for older ones too) who faces the physical and emotional challenges which Philmont offers.

The selection of photographs is well done, a lot of research went into this, and the book features a crisp, modern design. If this is your kind of thing, the \$14.95 price tag for the softcover edition is a genuine bargain. It is available directly from Philmont.

David L. Witt  
Taos

*Standing By and Making Do: Women of Wartime Los Alamos.* Jane S. Winston and Charlotte Serber, editors. Los Alamos: The Los Alamos Historical Society. Pp. 130.

FEW PEOPLE KNEW the United States Army had taken over a private school and ranch properties in northern New Mexico in the early 1940s, or that an unusual number of buildings were being erected in the area. In 1943, the first of hundreds of American, Canadian, British and European scientists, U.S. Army and service personnel began to arrive. The newcomers found laboratories, test facilities, dormitories, small houses, building still in progress, and shortages of almost everything. Their Pueblo Indian neighbors were 15 to 20 miles away and the off-limits lights of Santa Fe were 45 miles distant. They soon learned they were living in a closed society.

Basically, this book is about life in a secret village that grew to a secret city, by nine women, eight of whom lived it. Seven were "Atomic Wives," the eighth an "Army Wife," and the ninth headed the Los Alamos office in Santa Fe. All were involved in the "Project."

In 1946, when "Los Alamos" was revealed to the world, researcher Robert Marshak received a request from a publisher for a human interest story about the secret settlement. He turned it over to his wife, Ruth. She and a group of women, knowing they soon would be going their separate ways, had been writing about their experiences while memories and reactions were fresh. Thus the manuscript came into being but was rejected by two publishers. Thirty years later, Jane A. Wilson, a contributor and editor, gave the manuscript to the Los Alamos Historical Museum.

In 1987, the Los Alamos Historical Society's Publications Committee reviewed manuscripts from the archival collection and chose this for publication and funded the project. Each chapter is preceded with a biographical sketch and photo of the author. The text is illustrated with contemporary photos of the area.

1. *Secret City*, Ruth Marshak
2. *109 East Palace*, Dorothy McKibben
3. *A Roof Over Our Heads*, Kathleen Mark
4. *Not Quite Eden*, Jane S. Wilson
5. *Labor Pains*, Charlotte Serber
6. *Law and Order*, Alice Kimball Smith
7. *Operation Los Alamos*, Shirley B. Barnett
8. *Fresh Air and Alcohol*, Jean Bacher
9. *Going Native*, Charlie Masters

Jane S. Wilson says it all in the introduction to *Standing By and Making Do*: "This is the story of three years of working and marrying and dying, of giving birth and getting drunk, of laughing and crying, which culminated in that successful test at the Alamo-gordo bombing range. It is the story of Los Alamos. In a sense, it is history."

Mildred Bruder Buchanan  
Talpa

*Indian Tales from Picuris Pueblo.* Collected by John P. Harrington. Santa Fe: Ancient City Press, 1989. Pp. vi, 104. Illus., notes, references.

THE ANCIENT CITY PRESS OF SANTA FE has done an outstanding job of mining the annals of U.S. government studies of the Southwest, republishing material from obscure sources for the interest of new readers today. Farm Security Administration photographs and Spanish folk tales from the Mora valley have been subjects of past Ancient City books. Folklorist Marta Weigle and publisher Mary Powell are to be commended for their efforts in making such materials widely available.

The stories included in this volume--21 children's stories and 7 accounts of Picuris folkways--were collected by linguist John P. Harrington about 1918. They were related to him by Rosendo Vargas of the Picuris, and were translated by Harrington from the Northern Tiwa dialect. Ethnomusicologist Helen Roberts provided musical transcriptions for songs accompanying several of the stories, and the material was published as part of the *Forty-third Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology* in 1928.

All things considered, the stories presented here are not so different from the typical children's stories found in other cultures the world over. Many are about animal characters endowed with human characteristics. Most are obviously products of and for the imagination. Some recall hard times the people have endured, such as war or famine. Some contain veiled threats of what may happen to a child who strays far from the village, stays out after dark, or does not obey his parents.

These tales are full of the mythic-sounding characters often associated with the literature of Native Americans--characters like Yellow Corn Woman, Magpietail Boy, Old Giant and the Two Dove Maiden Sisters. But underneath the externals of characters and action are themes of universal human experience. And how could it be otherwise? One tale deals with conflict and suspicion between a man and his wife, another with caution and fear when the Picuris were at war with their neighbors.

The tales also include interesting references to nearby places: "Once upon a time when the people were dwelling at San Juan Pueblo;" "Some fled, on account of the famine, to San Juan, Santa Clara, San Ildefonso;" "Once upon a time people were living at the Pueblo. Also people were living up northwest at Taos."

In recent years there has been a good deal of sensitivity to the issue of ownership and re-telling of Native American materials. In contrast to some others, the Picuris have been pleased to record, on video and in print, cultural traditions that they want preserved, that they realize are in danger of extinction.

David L. Caffey  
Taos



## NEWS AND NOTES

### PRESERVATION NOTES:

#### SOCIETY VISITS PRESERVATION PROJECTS

Summer and fall field trips took T.C.H.S. members and visitors to two nearby historic sites for which restoration and preservation projects are currently underway.

A summer trip took participants to *Los Luceros*, near the Espanola Valley village of Alcalde. *Los Luceros*, now under ownership and management of the American Studies Foundation, has a number of notable historic structures, including an early Spanish hacienda.

In October the Society visited the Cleveland Roller Mill in the Mora Valley. The mill is one of the few surviving mill structures still equipped with its original milling machinery. The mill is the subject of a continuing preservation effort by residents of the valley, including descendants of those who owned and worked in the original mill. The mill is being made into a living museum

which will one day include demonstration milling operations.

The T.C.H.S. made a gift of \$100 from its Historic Preservation Fund to assist with the preservation of *Los Luceros*.

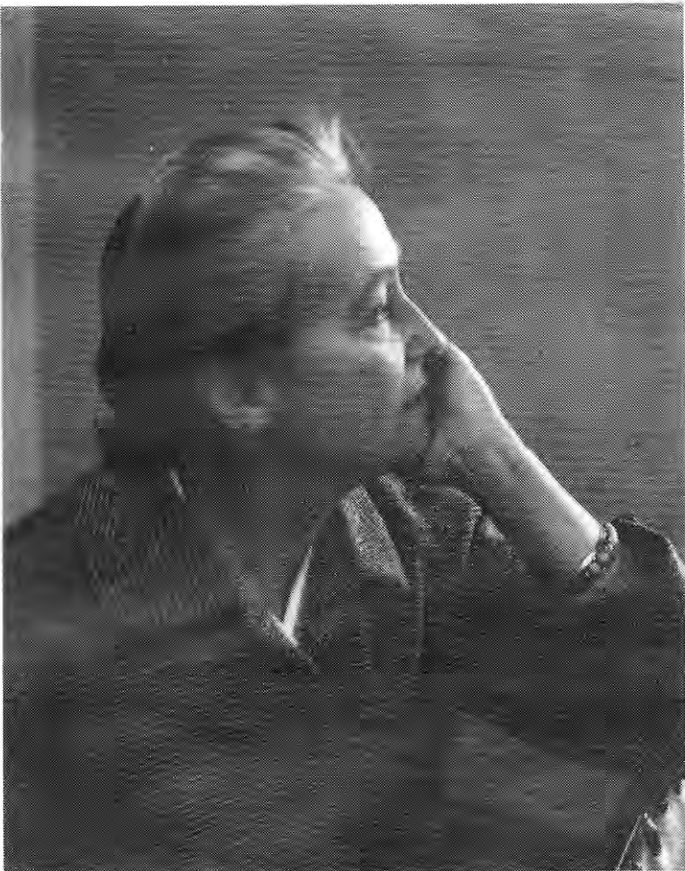
#### MURPHEY HELPS ROUTE 66 EFFORT

Taos resident Michael Martin Murphey is involved with an unusual historic preservation effort. He is producing a music video of the pop classic, "Get Your Kicks on Route 66," with plans for some of the royalties to benefit the New Mexico Route 66 Association. The Association hopes to persuade Congress and the National Park Service to study ways to preserve and revitalize the historic "auto trail," which enjoyed its heyday in the 1950s, before the current I-40 was built.

Many associate Route 66 with neon signs, souvenir shops, and roadside eateries that stood alongside the highway. Part of the preservation effort is aimed at revitalizing local businesses along the route. Murphey hopes his video will help interest younger people in Route 66 and generate support for a bill now pending in Congress.

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## Taos County Historical Society Remembers . . .



HELEN G. BLUMENSCHIN  
1909-1989

HELEN BLUMENSCHIN was founding President of the Taos County Historical Society, a long-time board member, and a lifelong active member of the society.

Helen had a rich heritage in Taos history. She was the daughter of early Taos artists Ernest and Mary Blumenschein and she moved with them to Taos in 1919. She grew up on Ledoux Street, near the home of Burt and Lucy Harwood, and witnessed the inception and development of the Harwood Foundation. She was a member of Taos' first ski club, a forerunner to the modern ski industry. She served her country in World War II as a member of the Women's Army Corps.

Ms. Blumenschein had an enduring interest in the archeology and history of New Mexico and the Taos Valley. She participated in numerous digs and carried out varied historical researches, publishing some of her findings in the *El Palacio* magazine of the Museum of New Mexico. She also researched and published on old trails of the Taos area. As President of TCHS, she published an occasional "history letter" to the membership. An artist, she did portraits of many notable Taosenos; many of the images are included in her *Sounds and Sights of the Taos Valley*. She gave her parents home on Ledoux Street to the Kit Carson Foundation.



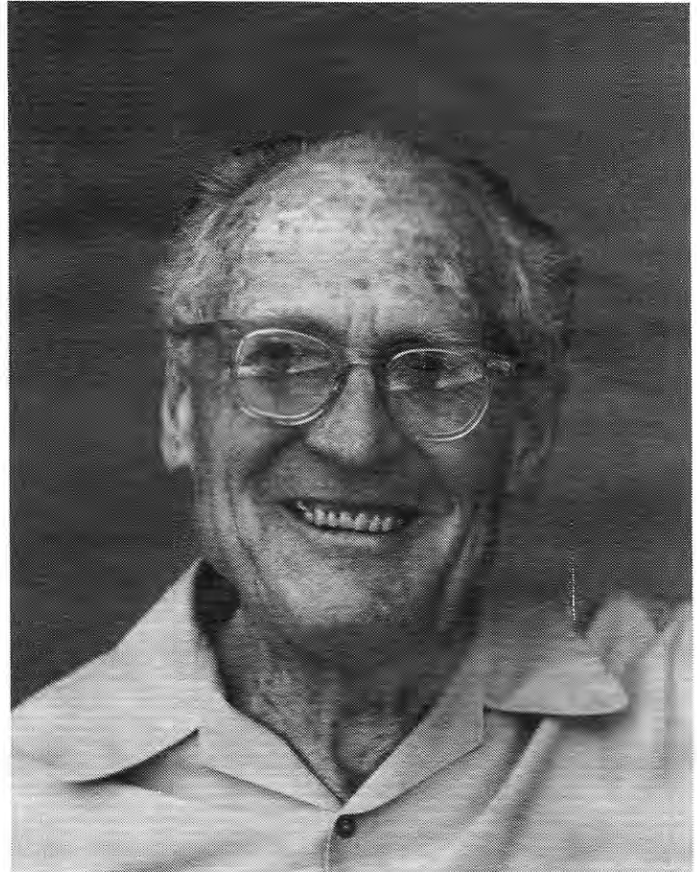
JACK K. BOYER  
1911-1989

JACK BOYER made his mark as a preservationist primarily through his work as Executive Director of the Kit Carson Foundation.

Born at the small New Mexico mining town of Van Houten, he moved to Taos with his family at the age of 9. He saw and lived much of Taos history. He witnessed the disastrous fires on Taos Plaza in the 1930s, and responded by helping organize the Taos Volunteer Fire Department. When the country went to war in 1940, he served with the New Mexico National Guard's 200th Coast Artillery, antiaircraft. His story--and that of other Taosenos who endured the hardships of Bataan and the Japanese POW camps--is told in the Fall 1988 issue of *Ayer y Hoy*.

Following a medical discharge from the service, Boyer returned home to Taos. He soon after became involved in preservation of the Kit Carson home, a property of the Bent Lodge of Taos. It was the beginning of a 34-year career as the keeper of Taos historic treasures.

Boyer was a charter member of the Taos County Historical Society and served as Treasurer for several years. He was honored by the local society and was presented the Board of Directors award of the Historical Society of New Mexico.



DAVID A. BAERREIS  
1916-1989

DAVID BAERREIS was born in New York. He was educated at Oxford and Cambridge universities, and received the Doctor of Philosophy degree from Columbia University. He was Professor of Anthropology and held other positions at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, for some 35 years. He was widely published, producing respected works on the eastern Indian tribes and other subjects.

Baerreis retired to Taos, where he and his wife, Margaret, could live near members of her family, including Jack and Dorothy Brandenburg and John and Barbara Brenner. In Taos pursued his hobby--he was a philatelist--and shared his expertise in anthropology, serving on the local board of Southern Methodist University's Fort Burgwin Research Center. He expressed his continuing interest in libraries by purchasing major gifts for the Harwood Library reference collection.

Baerreis was a member of the Taos County Historical Society and served as Chairman of the Society's Historic Preservation Committee. Under his leadership, the Society made gifts to help preserve the beautiful San Jose Church at Las Trampas, and to help restore the Church of San Lorenzo at Picuris Pueblo.

**AYER Y HOY en Taos**  
**Yesterday and Today in Taos County and**  
**Northern New Mexico**