

AYER Y HOY en Taos

Yesterday and Today in Taos County and
Northern New Mexico



RECOLLECTIONS OF THE EARLY ARTISTS
by Helen Greene Blumenschein page 3

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EDITOR'S PAGE

by David L. Caffey

FOR ALL WHO KNEW HER, there could be no doubt that Helen G. Blumenschein was one of a kind.

The daughter of early Taos artists Ernest Blumenschein and Mary Greene Blumenschein, she moved to Taos at an early age and grew up with the community. Legendary personages of twentieth century Taos--Long John Dunn, Mabel and Tony Luhan, Doughbelly Price, Joseph Sharp and the early artists--all were part of the mosaic of her daily life.

Helen knew the celebrated characters of Taos, but she was just as interested in the people who cooked and gardened for her parents, and in the girls she helped as the leader of the community's first Girl Scout troop. She respected and was interested in all cultures, and she respected and valued all people.

Helen's services for the community--especially in the interest of its historic and prehistoric heritage--were many. She studied and practiced archeology, published her findings, helped organize the Taos County Historical Society and remained active and interested in its programs and decisions throughout her life. She was instrumental in marking historic sites, saving papers, relics and photographs; and in supporting the work of the Kit Carson Foundation. She was generous with property and with funds, and with her time and encouragement.

During the last few years of her life, Helen was encouraged by her friend, Corina Santistevan, to record aspects of her own life experience. She made substantial progress on a manuscript, of which the featured article for this issue is an excerpt. Friends will recognize her voice in the article, as well as a characteristic that was part of her special essence: complete candor and honesty of expression. She was utterly without guile or pretense, first, last, and at all times in between.

* * *

This marks the tenth and final issue of *Ayer y Hoy en Taos* for this editor. When we started the publication some five years ago, we hoped to publish, if in modest installments, some original materials on Taos and northern New Mexico history, worthy of inclusion in the historical record. We also thought the publication might be an attractive benefit of membership in the Taos County Historical Society. I am satisfied that we have achieved a good deal of both objectives, and although it is a lot of work, I hope the Society will find it possible to continue with the publication.

I am heading west to Farmington, where I will serve as Director of Instructional Support Services at San Juan College. It is no small comfort to know that I will be near enough to visit Taos frequently, and that I will be surrounded by an equally rich historical legacy in the Four Corners area.

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Cover art by Helen Greene Blumenschein, courtesy of Corina Santistevan.

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

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THE TAOS COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY is a New Mexico non-profit organization dedicated to the study and preservation of the historical resources of Taos County and northern New Mexico. Membership is open to any interested person, regardless of residence.

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RECOLLECTIONS OF THE EARLY ARTISTS

by Helen Greene Blumenschein

MY FATHER first met Bert Phillips in Paris, where they were taking art courses. Phillips spoke so highly of the West, with its Indians and beautiful mountains, that he persuaded Blumy to meet him in Denver, Colorado, buy a wagon and team of horses, and go south to Taos and on to Mexico. They had no experience with horses and wagons, so had to watch closely as they were shown how to hitch the horses to the wagon.

They left Denver and headed south, camping near a mountain stream where they tied both horses to trees near the stream. One of the horses broke his rope and went to the stream to drink. The men caught and retied him, and the next morning they were on their way again. Within twenty-five miles of Taos, the wagon broke a wheel. Bert and Blumy tossed a coin to decide which of them would stay with the wagon and which would take the wheel to Taos to be repaired. My father's toss won him the trip into town. He rode one of the horses, carrying the wheel over his shoulder.

The scenery Blumy observed on the ride was so outstanding that, upon his return to the wagon, he told Phillips that he was going to stay in Taos instead of continuing south. Phillips agreed, and when they arrived in town, the men found rooms opposite what is now the Taos Inn but was then the house of Dr. T.P. Martin, whose sister was subsequent-

ly courted by and married to Bert Phillips.

Bert Phillips loved to paint the yellow aspens in the fall. My father loved the Indians and so mostly painted them. They made good models and were paid for sitting. Phillips was successful in selling his aspen paintings, and my father in selling his Indians--portraits and dances--as the tourists were already coming to Taos.

Blumy did have to return to New York to fulfill a contract to illustrate for a magazine, as well as to rejoin his wife and daughter. He finally persuaded us to come for a brief visit in 1913, and we later moved to Taos permanently.

The American artists who followed Joseph Henry Sharp to Taos were a friendly group. They took turns entertaining each other. My recollection as a ten-year-old child was of Walter Ufer being a long-winded, famous storyteller, recounting his tales with sound effects! His landscapes with Indians on horseback captured the sunlight of New Mexico as no other artist has done since.

Mrs. Ufer was a long-suffering, hard working woman. When Ufer died, he left her nothing, as he had spent all he had on the slot machines scattered around town. This upset my father so that he passed the hat to collect money for Mrs. Ufer.

EDITOR'S NOTE: This article is a chapter excerpted from an unpublished manuscript, RAMBLING MEMORIES, by Helen G. Blumenschein. Ruth Hatcher transcribed, edited and typed the handwritten manuscript, and Corina Santistevan arranged for publication of this chapter in AYER. Y HOY. The article is used here by permission of Shirley G. Davis. All copyrights are reserved to Shirley Greene Davis.

Ufer's being nearsighted explains the minute detail with which he painted. My only personal objection was that the subject matter was always the same during the period in which I knew him: his favorite arroyo with Indians riding horses, always under a bright blue sky. Most of those early artists sold their paintings through dealers in New York. I wonder what ever happened to all of Ufer's brilliantly lit paintings.

In Taos, Joseph Sharp purchased a Christian Brothers chapel next to his property. I do not know what he used it for--perhaps for storing his paintings. His wife was terribly deaf and Sharp's voice was so mild. I wonder if they could communicate well.

After "Buck" Dunton sold us his property on Ledoux Street, he moved to La Loma, where he had a two story house. He would tell tale after tale of his successful hunting trips. This is probably what started me hunting for the table--rabbits, turkey, and deer in later years, even an unsuccessful bear hunt, but that is another story.

Dunton painted a picture of his two children and their horses, a masterpiece which is now in the Museum of Fine Art in Santa Fe. I knew the children after they were grown up. Ivan lived in Oregon and Vivian lived in Alaska, where she did medical work. She retired in Anchorage, she told me, because they had given her such good compensation there. Several years ago I was in Alaska with friends from Maine. We stayed at a ranch at the foot of Mount McKinley--I did a watercolor, and later a large oil of that awe-inspiring mountain. While in Anchorage, we had lunch with Vivian, and she seemed quite happy there. She returned to Taos just once to settle family affairs. She gave her saddle to the Kit Carson Memorial Foundation.

Our neighbors on Ledoux Street, the Harwoods, made a lasting impact on the Taos community with their great interest in art and creativity in general. After Burt Harwood's death, his wife turned their property over to the community and later to the University of New Mexico, to be used for art and craft shows, along with the development of a public library. For some years the University of New Mexico ran a summer art school at the Harwood Foundation, as it came to be known.

Leon Gaspard was a long-winded and fascinating monologist at the yearly get-togethers given by the Karavas brothers for the artists and their families. These were held at the La Fonda Hotel, on the south side of Taos Plaza. What a shame it is that we did not have tape recorders in those days!

Leon and his wife, Evelyn, first visited Taos in 1918. My first memory of them was the rabbit episode in the 1920s. In 1931 they finished building the only early eccentric house in Taos. It was accidentally painted iron red instead of lavender pink. Little do I remember of the interior of the house, which seemed unusually dark to me. I

do recall buying fresh eggs from Evelyn, who was a very jealous woman.

After Evelyn's death Gaspard married a much younger woman, Dora Kaminsky, a talented artist. After Gaspard's death, she gave many Russian artifacts for display in the Blumenschein house. Dora, in turn, married a much younger man, Paco Blackman, but her life ended when she died of a blood clot after a face lifting operation.

Victor Higgins was a lady's man. His best friend was Eleanora Kissel, who also lived on Ledoux Street in later years and had her studio where R.C. Gorman's gallery is today. Victor was unfortunate after his first wife passed away. He married a well-to-do lady from Texas, moved to Texas, and later divorced her and moved back to Taos.

I did a charcoal head of Higgins, but threw it away because he did not look well. I could never make myself draw anyone younger or prettier than they were. Those who sat for commissioned portraits always understood that I would not charge them if they did not like what I did. None of my drawings was rejected.

Kenneth Adams was fortunate in his early years to have a devoted friend, Hilda, whom he married in spite of the fact that she suffered from tuberculosis. She and Eulalia Emetaz had one of the early galleries in Taos, which helped Ken a lot. Hilda died young, however, and Adams married again. The second wife had been a teacher. Instead of letting Adams continue with his painting, she helped him secure a position teaching art at the University of New Mexico for the rest of his life--a sad end for a creative person, but he did help so many young art students. His wife enjoyed entertaining and so Ken sold a picture now and then.

Regina Cooke was one of my earliest friends, along with Eulalia Emetaz, who had her gallery on Guadalupe Plaza. Regina first studied with Walter Ufer when she came to Taos. When I became acquainted with her, she was writing about the local artists' work for our local newspaper. She mentioned Walter Ufer being dressed in army clothes in the 1920s, as was my father, his legs encased in khaki puttees. Probably it was because our streets were so muddy or dusty in the early days; they didn't want to get their trousers dirty. Regina continued writing for the Taos paper for many years, and was still writing an art column from her bed in a Santa Fe nursing home until shortly before her death.

Eulalia Emetaz began showing my prints and silkscreens in her gallery in the 1930s. She impressed me by selling at least one a week until they were all gone after ten years.

Nicolai Fechin, the Russian artist, never bothered to learn English when he arrived in Taos with his family. His wife, Alexandra ("Tinka"), and his daughter, Eya, both knew English, but it would only distract Fechin

from his work. Like so many artists and writers who came to Taos, Fechin wished to concentrate on his work. He not only painted during the day, but sometimes at night, besides which he did beautiful wood carving all through the two story house he had purchased from Dr. Bergman. What a workaholic he was!

On the spacious grounds Fechin added a large studio and still another small house where the cooking was done a la Russian style. Tinka gave parties now and then. She served a homemade cordial from the raspberries they grew in their front yard. It must have been quite potent, since everyone had such a gay time. Fechin remained silent but smiling as he watched the animated visitors and friends. Though he spoke no English, I'm sure he understood it. His paintings were impressionistic in style, vigorous and with good color and composition.

I made an hour-long tape recording of Tinka telling how they all escaped from Russia and landed in Taos, probably at the invitation of Mabel Luhan. Tinka also wrote an excellent book of her life in Russia, then the coming to America with her husband and daughter Eya. Mabel liked the book and told Alexandra she should "liberate" herself and write more books. She never wrote another book, but was liberated from her husband when he left her and moved to California.

Eya Fechin Branham trained as a dancer, but eventually created her own method of body movement called Eutonics, which she taught in New York City and then in VA hospitals, in one of which she met the doctor to whom she was married for a time, and with whom she had a daughter. Eya came back to New Mexico, but used her talents for some while in Albuquerque, at Nazareth Hospital and the University of New Mexico, before coming back to Taos in her mother's declining years.

Oscar E. Berninghaus was such a friendly person. He came to Taos from St. Louis, where he had created the costumes and floats for the Parade of the Veiled Prophets and the famous ball they had every year. He also illustrated, as so many of the early artists did to make a living. When he moved to Taos he settled up the hill on the Loma, with a beautiful view to the west. From then on he fell in love with the landscape and Indians. He, too, had his favorite Indian model, and those early Indian models were true friends of the early artists and their families.

Berninghaus had a son, Charles, and a daughter, Dorothy, by his first wife. After her death he married Winnie, who was an active participant in the civic affairs of Taos. Dorothy married Jack Brandenburg, who started the first Conoco station on the plaza and ran an insurance business with Floyd Beutler, who married Bert Phillips's daughter, Margaret. Brandenburg also became President of First State Bank of Taos. Among those who worked in that bank were Ben Tenorio, our neighbor on Ledoux Street, and Eloy Jeantete, a des-

endant of one of the early French trappers who were after beaver in the 1800s.

Around 1934 I did one of my charcoal heads of Oscar Berninghaus. This I gave to his granddaughter, Barbara Brandenburg Brenner, in 1987. She has a strong attachment to the historic past, which many young people do not seem to have today.

Howard Cook and Barbara Latham had a house out in Talpa. Howard was widely known for his black and white pictures and Barbara an excellent illustrator for children's books, although they never had any children of their own. After I bought a house in Nambe from Edith King, who enjoyed art and artists, I rented it one whole year to Howard and Barbara, as Howard needed a warmer place at that time. But it seems Edie came over too often to have Howard give a critique of her paintings, so Barbara ended their stay in the Nambe house. Fortunately, a friend offered them a home and studio in Roswell, where they stayed for some years before entering a retirement home in Santa Fe. Howard had been seriously ill and feared ending up in the infirmary permanently. Sadly, one day when Barbara was out shopping he shot himself. Where he had hidden the pistol was a mystery to her.

Andrew Dasburg, an artist and well known former art teacher in the East, was someone who appealed to me. He came here from Santa Fe and bought a house in Talpa, not far from Howard and Barbara Cook. His work became more modern as it developed out here. The few times that I took my work to get a "critique" from Dasburg, he always said, "I think this is the best work you have done." After several times of this flattery I quit asking for his opinion. He did pose for me for one of my good charcoal and conte heads, which is in my booklet, *Sounds and Sights of Taos Valley*. He was one of the few artists who came out to my studio in Arroyo Seco during 1962-1970 to give me encouragement in my work, as both my parents had passed away by then.

Dasburg had a faithful helper who took care of him in his last days. Earlier he was a strong influence on the young artists coming to Taos after World War II. He had a fine old cottonwood tree on his property; he would point to the tree and say, "I will be here as long as that tree will stand." The tree is still there, but Andrew gave up and told his helper he would not take his medicine any longer. He had lived in Talpa from 1930 to 1979.

Dasburg's wife, Marina, was the daughter of Owen Wister, who wrote *The Virginian*. In the 1940s she gave musical evenings once a week at their house in Talpa, playing classical records from their extensive collection for invited guests. She was a talented pianist and had one of the few grand pianos in town. On occasion she invited our art group to be her audience while she played. Another inspiring recital took place at the Dasburg home when a friend of mine, Ilda

Emetaz, came from back east to visit Taos. A famous French-Italian pianist, she had come to show her young son, Roland, to his grandfather, Henri Emetaz, who lived on a ranch northeast of Ranchos de Taos.

I have purposely not mentioned all the many artists I knew except the few very early ones in Taos, like Ila McAfee Turner, who came to visit Taos in 1926 with her husband, Elmer. The Turners were then on their way to California, but they returned the very next year to stay. In 1928 they built a studio home on Armory Street, calling it the "White Horse Studio," as Ila is famous for her painting of horses. She grew up on a ranch near Gunnison, Colorado. Ila also likes to paint wild animals of all sizes. Whenever "Elmo," as she called her husband, painted a landscape, she always put creatures in his foreground. Once he did a still life and she put in a mouse! So you see she has an excellent sense of humor besides being a prolific painter. She has large canvases in private homes, in museums like the Stark Museum of Orange, Texas, and she has done murals for the Chicago World Fair and the Greely, Colorado library, and for other public buildings.

Elmer Turner, who was badly affected by gas and flu in World War I, met Ila while they were studying art with the same teacher in Chicago. Before they were married, a doctor warned Ila of the lifelong consequences to Elmer's health from his war experience, but she was willing to face those with him. Ila had been a Methodist and Elmo a Baptist, but they joined the Presbyterian Church in Taos as it was the only one other than the Catholic Church when they came to Taos.

Unfortunately, Elmer's condition caused a creeping paralysis that curtailed his movement until he was chairbound. Ila helped him with his paints and brushes. Eventually he could not talk above a whisper, much less paint, but his mind was not affected and he retained his faculties to the end. After he passed on, Ila would boast of sleeping in twenty-five different beds every winter visiting her friends. Ila was given an appreciation dinner on January 30, 1988, to celebrate her being ninety years old, but age hardly slows her down. She still paints and travels and sleeps in many beds!

Ila and Elmo had a Siamese cat that became famous to the extent of having two movies done of it. They called the cat "Sanka," because it didn't keep them awake at night. It learned over seventy tricks and lived a long, long life, much of which was spent entertaining people who came to the White Horse Studio to buy paintings. Ila later got another cat named Carlos, and began teaching him tricks.

In our younger years Ila and I often rode out on the west mesa together on our horses. There were no houses out there then. A retrospective of Ila's paintings in 1988 brought back many memories from a long stretch of years.

As I mentioned before, the early Indian models were an intimate part of our daily life. I remember Jim Romero eating lunch at the table with us. After Jim died, Don Mondragon and his wife, Maria, posed for us. Another picture in Blumy's studio is of Epiménio seated before the fireplace there. This fireplace was later taken down to give more room for Blumy's large exhibition paintings.

Maria Mondragon also posed for an excellent photo show painting, in which she is seated on our adobe *horno* on the south side of the house in the 1920s, in her shawl and boots. In those days, women at each of the pueblos had distinctive hairstyles and their boots, pure white and made of deerskin, had a distinctive design. The Taos men in those days wore two carefully braided pigtails in front on either side of the chest, except when they danced. Then their long black hair was allowed to ripple down their backs like the women's, often to their waists.

During the depression years of the 1930s, almost all the artists in Taos painted murals for public buildings under the W.P.A. program. In Taos in 1933-34, the program supported the painting of murals in the Taos County Courthouse on the north side of the plaza, in the second floor courtroom. The artists selected to do these murals were Bert Phillips, Emil Bisttram, Victor Higgins, and Ward Lockwood. Lockwood lived for a time to the west of our house on Ledoux Street. It is said that the artists received \$56.00 a month for their labors, but I wonder if that is possible. Perhaps, because posing or yard work earned only \$2.00 a day then. Even in Europe during 1929-1931 I paid only \$20.00 each for those beautiful *armoires* in the Blumenschein house. They were put together with pegs, and were easily disassembled. When we brought them to Taos, the local Spanish carpenters had no trouble putting them together again, as they used the same method for making their *trasteros*.

Howard Cook was famous for his murals in post offices, and Kenneth Chapman did one for the Raton, New Mexico post office. Ila McAfee has one in the post office at Gunnison, Colorado, where she went to school, as well as in the post offices at Edmond and Cordell, Oklahoma, and at Clifton, Texas.

My father painted an excellent mural of the Walsenburg Peaks for the post office at Walsenburg, Colorado. He stayed in Walsenburg while he made a study sketch for the mural from nature. As I remember, he was paid \$2,000 for that job. The mural is still there, protected now by glass. I asked that the glass be removed, as the canvas cannot "breathe" when covered that way. And, in any event, the mural is placed high so that curious hands cannot touch it.

During the same period, the Albuquerque High School purchased paintings done by the Taos artists, including one of my father's best, "White Sun and Star Road." All of those paintings have recently been placed in the Albuquerque Museum.

BOOK REVIEWS

Paso Por Aqui: Critical Essays on the New Mexican Literary Tradition, 1542-1988.

Edited by Erlinda Gonzales-Berry. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1989.

I approached *Paso Por Aqui* eager to learn more about the conquistadors I knew by name only and to deepen my knowledge of New Mexico Hispanic literature.

Literature of exploration in New Mexico began with *La Relacion*, Alvar Nunez Cabeza de Vaca's account of his wanderings on foot for nine years with three companions across the Gulf Coast of Mexico to New Mexico, Arizona, and to Mexico in 1536. His account was not published until 1542, and was not available to de Soto or Cortes or other explorers waiting for permission to look for the Seven Cities of Gold, somewhere in the north, as reported by de Vaca. Viceroy Mendoza wanted his own full-scale *entrada*, but instead sent Fray Marcos de Niza, ostensibly for missionary purposes. The friar spread the tales of gold and great wealth, but his accounts were labeled lies. His accounts have been judged the least reliable, but the most literary.

Fray Marcos's accounts made possible Coronado's expedition of 1542-43. Coronado wrote about his expedition, but his report languished in manuscript form, unread by anyone. Pedro de Costanado wrote about the expedition twenty years after the fact, in Spain. Bernard Diaz de Costillo and Fray Marcos also wrote about the trip, the former a balanced account, the latter with apparent inaccuracies. Coronado's "failure to make immediately profitable discoveries" led to laws in 1543-44, restricting new expeditions, but a minor one was made by Francisco Ibarra in 1565, and another by Friar Augustin Ramirez in 1581. Ramirez reached present day San Felipe and Taos, which was named for Mexico's Tlascalala.

Encouraged by other accounts, Juan de Onate set forth in 1598 to colonize New Mexico. In the post-exploration period, the literature changed, as Onate's settlers were reported enjoying "a fine drama. . . enacted to show the welcome with which all of New Mexico greeted the arrival of the church." Festivities in celebration of Onate's arrival at his "San Juan de Caballeros" lasted a week, and included "jousting matches, bull fights, the performance of a gay well-written comedy that was composed especially for the occasion, and 'Moors and Christians' plays which were enacted with such a thunder of artillery that they inspired remarkable fear and awe among the many barbarian braves who came as spies to watch us . . ."

The shepherds' plays have almost always had a delicate relationship with the official church, because of a tendency to go beyond what the church considered religious discretion. Moreover, colonial musicians and poets wrote original works displaying satirical, humorous, and political tones. On the northern Spanish frontier, the community's music and poems served to reinforce acceptable behavior codes to be heeded by the faithful.

The early exploration documents initiated what has since become a rich heritage of Hispanic literature. In colonial times, literacy was generally confined to government scribes and ecclesiastical scholars who lacked the means to reproduce their works. Folk dramas, tales, balladry, and allegorical novelas, similar to those produced in Spain, were easily transplanted to New Mexico after colonization.

Rowena Rivera, well known in Taos for her lectures, explains how Mexico and New Mexico were recipients of Spain's musical vitality, which was imposed on the Aztec's musical culture. Aztec musicians, who lived near the temples and called citizens to pray at dawn, noon and evening, easily adapted Christian religious customs similar to their own.

Secular music flourished because colonists and soldiers brought songs, romances and dances from Castile and Andalusia. Cortes had a keen interest in music, so he brought European minstrels, *juglares*, and trubadors to entertain his troops and teach songs and poetry to the Indians. Much later the *corrido* (romantic merry song) became the most popular form of music in Mexico, and later throughout the Southwest.

An assessment of the Hispanic literary tradition of the Southwest in the 19th century is difficult, because of the absence of published works. But what about the extensive oral works just mentioned? Were they "sub-literary" forms? In the eyes of the invading Anglo-American, they were judged irrelevant and relegated to obscurity. Newcomers minimized the achievements of Hispanics and supplanted them with Anglo-American imports from northern Europe.

In evaluating Hispanic literary activity, it is necessary to consider other, if less celebrated forms. The novel did exist, but was treated with indifference by critics. To better identify and assess early Hispanic novelists, the author has enlisted the assistance of five of her colleagues at U.N.M. Her inclusion of articles by authors from Ohio, Texas, California and Washington shows how widespread is the interest in reassessing the Hispanic heritage of the Southwest.

Members of T.C.H.S. will find "Las Escritoras" an enjoyable chapter for its treatment of early Hispanic women writers of New Mexico. The Chicano cultural renaissance of the 1960s disclosed that many Hispanic women were writing, though seldom published or read. Of special local interest is Cleo-

fas Jaramillo of Arroyo Seco, founder of the *Sociedad Folklórica* and author of *Shadows of the Past*, *Spanish Fairy Tales*, and *The Genuine New Mexico Tasty Recipes*.

Pasó Por Aquí is a valuable source, indeed, for all who seek a deeper insight into the intellectual and artistic heritage of New Mexico.

Curtis Edwin Anderson
Taos

Reluctant Frontiersman: James Ross Larkin on the Santa Fe Trail, 1856-57. Edited and annotated by Barton H. Barbour and Marc Simmons. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press. Pp. 202. Illus., notes, biblio., index.

In September 1856, William Bent accepted twenty-five year old James Ross Larkin as a member of his wagon train destined from Westport to his trading fort on the Arkansas River. Larkin was unlike the typical traveler on the Santa Fe Trail, in that he was neither trader, tourist, nor soldier. Instead, he joined Bent's caravan in hopes that the rigors of trail life would somehow remedy a dyspeptic condition that had plagued him through much of his young life.

Fortunately for those interested in life on the Trail, he recorded his observations and impressions of people and events encountered during his trip in a diary which was donated to the National Park Service by a great-grandson in 1980. Eart Barbour, while working as a museum technician at Bent's Old Fort National Historic Site, where the diary had been repositied, gained permission in 1984 to transcribe and edit the journal. The present volume not only makes the diary available to a wider audience, but sets Larkin's adventure in the wider context of life on the Trail in the period between the U.S. War with Mexico and the Civil war as well.

In his introduction, Barbour perceptively points out that Larkin committed his thoughts to paper primarily for his own edification, and not as an effort to chronicle conditions on the Trail for the benefit of others. Consequently, readers will invariably lament that he did not more fully describe what he observed and who he met. Nevertheless, some of Larkin's entries supply detailed information not found in other trail journals. Such is the case with his description of Bent's New Fort and its daily affairs. Upon leaving the fort, he also noted that he had his horse and mules branded with Bent's brand--WB connected; this is the only existing record of the famous trader's brand.

From Bent's fort, Larkin traveled with a party of Bent wagons over Raton Pass to Lucien Maxwell's settlement, and on to Mora. Thereafter, he continued to Santa Fe, where he remained until March 1857, though his last diary entry is, regrettably, dated January 31. Even so, his impressions of the city's rich social life are illuminating.

Larkin's experience on the plains and in Santa Fe did not effect the cure he hoped for, but his diary, however abbreviated, is an important addition to the literature of the trail, especially with the addition of Barbour's helpful notes and interpretation.

Stephen Zimmer
Cimarron

Remote Beyond Compare: Letters from Don Diego de Vargas to His Family from New Spain and New Mexico, 1675-1706. Edited by John L. Kessell. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1989. Notes, index.

In *Remote Beyond Compare*, John Kessell edits the letters of Don Diego de Vargas to his family from New Spain and New Mexico. The book is important because while there was an extensive public record about Don Diego before these letters were discovered, there was also a dearth of information about the private man.

I do not take issue with Kessell's interpretation of the letters. However, as Kessell acknowledges, there will always be disagreements in translations. Be this as it may, one should not lament, as translations in English as well as the original letters in Spanish are included for scrutiny by the most critical and tenacious readers.

In reading between the cryptic lines that Vargas writes, I do not believe that deep in his heart Vargas wanted to return to Spain, or he would have done so, since he had ample opportunity. Contrary to the impression given by the book's title and by what Vargas wrote to his family, life apparently was agreeable and quite exciting in the "New World." As time passed, it became easier to stay and conquer remote provinces.

The letters remove some of the glitter from this "bronze hero's" shining armor. Some of the little known facts about Vargas that are illuminated by Kessell include the point that even though Vargas inherited an estate, he also accumulated substantial debt in his lifetime. Furthermore, he bought the governorship of New Mexico, as was the practice of the time. He also spent three years in jail pending resolution of charges brought against him after his term in office. Vargas, though, had the tenacity to redeem his honor and return to New Mexico, and despite a tragic personal family life, he remains a hero in New Mexico and Southwest history.

Unfortunately, as Kessell writes, we have none of Don Diego's worldly possessions to display in a museum and no monument or shrine or monument that marks his grave. The only thing we have to commemorate his fame and his deeds--other than the bland hotels, savings and loans, and shopping malls that bear his name--is the historical record. With this book, Kessell has added immensely to that record.

F.R. Bob. Romero
Taos

This is About Vision: Interviews with Southwestern Writers. Edited by William Balassi, John F. Crawford, and Annie O. Eysturoy. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1990. Pp. 272. Illus.

This volume offers personal interviews with sixteen New Mexico writers from the old and famous, like Frank Waters, to the up-and-coming, like Denise Chavez and Joy Harjo. The writers interviewed include novelists, short story writers, poets and dramatists. The authors have made an evident attempt to provide some balance among points of view, including eight men and eight women; four Hispanic writers and four Native Americans are included in the volume, along with eight Anglos.

John Crawford attempts to weave a thread of continuity, stringing the separate interviews together into a logical charm bracelet of personalities and points of view. This is practically impossible, because, as interviews will do, each of these takes on a life of its own. Moreover, no fewer than twelve interviewers took part in the project. With this in mind, it is not surprising that the interviews vary considerably in content and in their worth as sources of insight into the writers' views and approaches to writing.

Readers may be surprised to find the interviews with younger, lesser known writers to be the ones most generously infused with energy and insight. Waters, Edward Abbey, Rudolfo Anaya, and Tony Hillerman have been interviewed time and again, and there is not much here that they have not revealed in print before. John Nichols's interview is mainly concerned with a negative and somewhat fun-poking review of *American Blood* that happened to be on his mind when the interviewer arrived. This leaves the younger set to respond to the project in a fresh and highly engaging manner, as they are asked, perhaps for the first time, to reflect on their experiences and intentions as writers. Pat Mora, Linda Hogan, Denise Chavez, Joy Harjo, Jimmy Santiago Baca, and Luci Tapahonso are among those with whom many readers may not be familiar, but who provide revealing glimpses of themselves as people of the Southwest and as writers.

Adding to the interest and helpfulness of the book are photographs of each of the writers interviewed, along with selected bibliographies that will aid readers being introduced to particular writers in locating some of their works.

To those interested in our regional literature, either as readers or as practicing writers, interviews with writers are always interesting to read, and these are no exception. Congratulations to the editors and the sponsoring "New America Project" for this volume which acknowledges our literary past, while pointing to an exciting future.

David L. Caffey
Taos

Philmont: Where Spirits Soar. Photos edited by Jerry Poppenhouse, text by Joe Williams. Irving, Texas: Boy Scouts of America. Pp. 176. Illus.

This may be the last in a flurry of publications inspired by the fiftieth anniversary of Philmont Scout Ranch, gift of oilman Waite Phillips to the Boy Scouts of America. Carved out of the old Maxwell Land Grant in northern New Mexico, the ranch of 137,000 acres has a rich history that includes Ute and Apache Indians, trappers, gold miners and other frontiersmen. It now challenges and entertains some 18,000 Scouts and leaders from all over the U.S. and several foreign lands each summer, as they travel to New Mexico to hike, backpack, and participate in program activities suggested by the land's geography and history.

This particular volume was sponsored by the Phillips Petroleum Company, a company started by Waite Phillips's brothers, and one with lingering ties of heritage and sympathy for the legacy of the Phillips brothers. The book Phillips produced for Philmont is a coffee table affair, a beautiful volume measuring 9½ x 11 inches, full of immaculate color photographs and attractively designed. Phillips's chief photographer, Jerry Poppenhouse, proposed the project after participating in a Philmont expedition himself, and found Phillips company officials supportive. He served as project director, taking many of the photos himself and commissioning numerous other fine photographers inside and outside the company to record the beauty of Philmont in all seasons.

Most Philmont books are the products of "insiders"--longtime staff members and others who know the land and the operation intimately. By contrast, *Philmont: Where Spirits Soar* is an "outsider's" view. Writer Joe Williams did a good job, traveling the trails and mountain camps, talking to campers and staff members, getting the general spirit of the place; his lack of a thorough familiarity with the operation is evident in small details and minor inaccuracies. Even so, the book may prove the best introduction for distant readers, who like the book's creators, approach the subject as relative neophytes.

A puzzling choice in the book's design is the use of a two-page spread to display many of the photos. This means that one side of a brilliant photo disappears into the trough and emerges on the other side. This is roughly equivalent to taking an individual painting or photo, creasing it in the middle, and bowing it up on both sides of the crease--a method which does not tend to show a carefully made photo off to best advantage.

Still, it's a beautiful book and one that anyone who knows Philmont will be glad to own.

David L. Caffey
Taos

ARCHIVE:

Items of interest from the files of the Taos County Historical Society

MINUTES OF FIRST MEETING OF THE
TAOS COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
THORNE HOUSE-OCTOBER 21, 1952

Following the informal meeting of small group interested in the organization of a County Historical Society, Cards were sent to a large number of residents of Taos and vicinity, and a general invitation was issued in El Crepusculo announcing a meeting at Thorne House on Thursday, October 21, 1952.

Present at the meeting were Jack Boyer, Mrs. Sarah Etzold, Miss Helen Williams, Mrs. Maggie Gusdorf, Dr. and Mrs. A.F. Wasson, Mrs. Josephine Cameron, Mr. and Mrs. Paul Albright, Mrs. Elsie Weimer, Felix Valdes, and Tom Lujan of Taos Pueblo, also Ruth G. Fish, acting secretary. Major Boyer requested Mrs. Fish to preside, and then outlined the current plans of the State Park Commission to establish an historical museum in Taos, in connection with the Kit Carson Memorial State Park. Mr. Boyer said that he felt that an immediate effort should be made to collect and preserve all possible information and as many Material objects of historic value as possible. He cited the experience of the group in Williamsburg, Virginia, who had great difficulty in restoring the town, pointing out that Taos is already a bit late and has lost many treasures, but there is still time to preserve and restore many of her buildings, and collect all manner of material which should be placed in a museum, or properly marked and set apart as of historic value. He spoke of the hope of the Masonic Lodge to have one room of the Carson home refurnished very soon. He also mentioned Ex-Mayor John B. Sanchez' gift of old millstones to the town, the schools, and the Carson home and Park, adding that Mr. Sanchez was interested in having an old molino, which is good condition, removed to the Carson Park. Mrs. Weimer cited the sals of the Schaurich home and the old torreon at Talpa as being of especial historical interest.

A motion was made by Major Boyer, seconded by Miss Helen Williams, and unanimously carried, to have this group begin the organization of the Taos County Historical Society. Since regrets had been received from a number of people interested in the plan, requesting that they be advised of future meetings, it was decided to postpone indefinitely a permanent organization and election of officers. Major Boyer consented to continue as temporary coordinator and Ruth G. Fish as temporary secretary. She was instructed to write the New Mexico Historical Society in Santa Fe for information about their regulations, and the possibility of the becoming a Taos County Chapter of their society.

In the discussion that followed ideas for projects and individual contributions came from every one present, and it was agreed that everything regarding the historic events occurring in Taos County since 1541 should be studied, and biographical sketches of all possible Spanish-colonial families, the early church authorities, the Anglo-pioneers, the artists and writers, service men and women, civic and patriotic organizations, courts, schools and folklore should be collected from every possible source, also any information obtainable from the Taos Indians regarding their history. Along with the evaluation and placement of all such material, all possible material objects of historic import should be listed and given to the museum or loaned for public exhibition.

Suggestions for Projects:

~~Early History and historians~~

See page 2 -

Ruth G. Fish
Acting Secretary

Several documents relating to the founding of T.C.H.S. have recently surfaced, including these minutes of an organizational meeting held in the early 1950s.

The interest now centering in the development of Kit Carson Memorial State Park and a number of other groups concerned with the preservation of our cultures and folklore demands coordinated action. We must collect facts and material objects for our historical research and our museums.

Will you please plan to attend a meeting to organize a Taos County Historical Society at Thorne House, eight o'clock on the evening of Tuesday, October 15, 1952.

Taos, New Mexico
October 15, 1952

Planning Committee
By Ruth G. Fish
Acting Chairman

The TAOS COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY will meet at the HARWOOD FOUNDATION on February 19, 1953, at 7:30 P.M.

The program will be presented by Mrs. Winnie Berninghaus, Mrs. Rebecca James, and Mrs. Toni Tarleton, who will acquaint our members and visitors with some of the historical material available at the Harwood Foundation.

Please plan to attend.

February 13, 1953

Board of Governors
Ruth G. Fish

Postcard announcing the organizational meeting of the Taos County Historical Society, October 1952.

Postcard announcing the second general meeting, February 1953.



Photos of Taos Pueblo from the T.C.H.S. collection of some 200 historic photos of Taos and northern New Mexico.

NEWS AND NOTES

FULL HOUSE HONORS KENTNOR, ROMANCITO

More than eighty T.C.H.S. members and guests turned out to honor longtime Taos resident Helen Kentnor and writer/filmmaker Rick Romancito at the Sagebrush Inn on May 5.

Among those taking part in the ceremonies were Taos Pueblo Governor Mike Concha, Cacique Pete Concha, Romancito's sister, T.C.H.S. President Tom Bruce, former President Char Graebner, and Clark Funk.

Kentnor was honored in part for her role in establishing a tradition of gracious hospitality as she and her husband built and operated the Sagebrush Inn. Romancito was recognized for his efforts to record Taos history in published writings and in film and video.

NEW MEXICO CELEBRATES BANDELIER

Pioneer linguist, writer and anthropologist Adolph Bandelier will be honored with a series of activities planned to coincide with his 150th birthday.

Sponsored by the New Mexico Endowment for the Humanities, the Maxwell Museum of Anthropology, the National Park Service, and U.N.M. Leisure Services, the celebration includes numerous exhibits and events to be held throughout the month of August.

T.C.H.S. Field Trips: 1990

The following is a tentative schedule of Taos County Historical Society field trips for Summer 1990. All trips are scheduled to leave the Taos County Court House parking lot at 8:00 a.m. Participants are responsible for their own transportation and refreshments. All trips are without charge, and are open to the public. The Historical Society assumes no responsibility for any mishap, personal injury or loss.

Notices will be sent for each individual trip, so that members are notified of any important details or changes. Further information is available from Ernest Lyckman, Program Committee Chairman, 758-2259, or Tom Bruce, President, 758-1254.

Date	Program	Notes
Saturday, July 7, 1990	Visit points on the "Camino Real," historic route connecting Taos, Santa Fe, Chihuahua, and Mexico City. Also see some of the lesser known villages and points of interest on the "High Road to Taos."	You may wish to bring a picnic lunch. Rainwear is advisable for summer trips, in case of early afternoon showers.
Saturday, August 4, 1990	Visit points of interest in the San Luis Valley of northern New Mexico and southern Colorado--Costilla, San Luis, Fort Garland, Great Sand Dunes National Monument, old Crestone mining area.	This will be one of the longer trips. Be sure to bring a picnic lunch.
Saturday, September 1, 1990	Visit the Puye Cliffs and Bandelier National Monument. Anticipate an admission charge at both sites. This is an adventure into the prehistoric past.	Suggested reading before the trip: THE DELIGHT MAKERS, Adolph Bandelier's 1890 novel of prehistoric life.

The New Mexico Department of Public Safety has published a new booklet containing brief biographies of 88 New Mexico peace officers slain in the line of duty since 1874.

The book, *New Mexico's Finest: Peace Officers Killed in the Line of Duty, 1874-1989*, was compiled and written by Don Bullis, Director of the Office of Public Affairs for the Department of Public Safety. It was scheduled for release on Police Memorial Day, May 17.

Five of the first seven officer deaths chronicled in the book involved Lincoln County officers. Four of these deaths, plus the death of U.S. Deputy Marshal Robert Olinger, are attributed to "Billy the Kid."

Among those honored is the late Town of Taos Police Chief, Lee Pena. Pena died while making an arrest, at the age of 46.

The publication is available through the New Mexico DPS at a cost of \$3.00. Copies have also been provided to the families of slain lawmen, and to public libraries throughout the state.

CAFFEY TO FARMINGTON

Former T.C.H.S. President and editor, David Caffey, has accepted the position of Director of Instructional Support Services at San Juan College, a two-year public community college in Farmington, New Mexico.

Caffey's new mailing address is: Post Office Box 1731; Farmington, New Mexico 87401.