

AYER Y HOY en Taos

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



Monuments of Adobe

Winter 1992 \$3.00

A publication of the Taos County Historical Society



EDITOR'S PAGE

by *Kathy Cordova*

In the true tradition of preserving the past, a Taos County Historical Society project and the recent publication of a book, Monuments of Adobe, come together in a common theme in this issue.

Michael Miller, author of Monuments of Adobe, writes about the restored churches of the Archdiocese of Santa Fe. In the true keeping of sharing for the holidays and throughout the year, Miller donates the proceeds from the book to the Commission for the Preservation of Historic New Mexico Churches. He lends a wealth of knowledge to this labor of love, and his writings, undaunted research and his position as Director, Special Collections, Center of Southwest Research, the University of New Mexico, all blend together to form a volume worthy of preservation.

Mildred Buchanan of the Taos County Historical Society reports on the organization's donation toward the preservation of the San Rafael Church in La Cueva, New Mexico. Thus, our own local society also offers its own contribution toward preservation of historic structures. The church, incidentally, is also featured in Miller's book.

In keeping with the Christmas theme, Rick Romancito of Taos Pueblo and Josephine Cordova of El Prado share some Christmas insights into the celebrations of their own Native American and Hispanic cultures.

Jerry Padilla offers a local perspective to the Civil War, as he shares his research in an article discussing Taosenos who defended the Union.

'Tis the season to be giving, and our book reviews certainly offer some gift-giving suggestions on food for the mind, a new book for that special someone.

On behalf of the Taos County Historical Society, happy reading, and have a pleasant holiday season.

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The Taos County Historical Society's publication, *AYER Y HOY en Taos County and Northern New Mexico*, is published semi-annually by the Historical Society.

We invite articles of a scholarly nature, as well as book reviews of recent historical publications pertinent to the Taos-Northern New Mexico area. We are open to publishing occasional reminiscences, folklore, oral history, and poetry that are of lasting historical interest.

The Taos County Historical Society endeavors to maintain high standards of quality in *AYER Y HOY*, and we seek to make improvements as we go along. Readers' comments and suggestions are welcome.

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AYER Y HOY is mailed to all members of the Taos County Historical Society as a benefit of membership. Memberships are \$10 individual, \$15 family, and \$25 sustaining.

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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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LA TIERRA BENDITA

By Michael Miller

This ritual has been called the Lourdes of North America. Each year during Holy Week, Los Peregrinos from northern New Mexico make a hundred mile pilgrimage from Costilla, to Taos, over the mountains to Truchas, and finally to the Santuario de Chimayo, on the east end of Santa Cruz de la Canada. Two thousand miles to the south, in southwestern Guatemala, pilgrims crowd the roads leading to the shrine of Nuestro Senor de Esquipulas to celebrate semana santa (Holy Week) in honor of El Cristo Negro (or The Black Christ).

The celebration of a similar religious event in most Latin American countries is normally considered commonplace. However, in this case the celebrations and the religious cults which evolved are unique, because one hundred and sixty-eight years ago, Bernardo Abeita brought the cult of Esquipulas to the far reaches of Spain's northern frontier in Nuevo Mejico and established a belief that still thrives today.

The story of the miraculous image of Nuestro Senor de Esquipulas, commonly known as El Cristo Negro, goes back to the early days of the Spanish conquest. At that time, a group of Maya Indians lived in what is now modern Guatemala. Their leader, who ruled over the region, was called Esquipulas. In the Chorti dialect of the southern Maya language Esquipulas (Es-kip-ur-ha) meant spring, and near the town of Esquipulas, were many

sulphurous hot springs. (1)

To avoid the unnecessary slaughter of his people, Esquipulas decided not to offer resistance against the Spaniards in their conquest. For this gesture, the Spanish conquerors named the place in his honor, Santiago de Esquipulas, and soon after the area became well-known as a center for trade and religious activity.

The Indians of the area had experienced the cruelty and harshness of the white man many times during the conquest. As a consequence of these experiences, they were suspicious of a white Christ or any religious image that possessed a white color. They commissioned the well-known santero, Quirio Catano, to carve an image of Christ out of balsam and orange wood in honor of Esquipulas. The image was accepted immediately by the native population because the natural color of the wood resembled their own dark complexions. Eventually, the smoke from many burning candles and incense burned in honor of Senor Esquipulas turned the image a smokey black in color. Soon the adoration of Nuestro Senor de Esquipulas spread throughout the land, and the image came to be known as El Cristo Negro.

There appear to be two major reasons for the spread and popularity of the cult of Our Lord of Esquipulas, both with roots in the pre-Columbian past. The first is the black color of the image. In much of Latin America, the color black has been

considered sacred since the creation of the world. The second phenomenon, found in Guatemala and in New Mexico, is the practice of geophagy or earth-eating, a custom widespread throughout New Spain.

To the native people of Central America and New Mexico, the color black possesses certain spiritual qualities. Maya and Aztec priests, for example, painted their bodies black during religious ceremonies. Many of the gods venerated by these cultures possessed qualities that were attributed to the color black. Ycal-Ahau (the lord of the black ones) was the protector of travelers, merchants and pilgrims. It is also apparent from many customs practiced by religious pilgrims that the color black was an important aspect of New World shrines. (2)

The fame of Esquipulas soon was elevated to a height far exceeding the significance and importance of other shrines in the area. This fame was a direct result of the miraculous cures credited to the santo's curative powers.

Reports of miracles aroused the interest of the Spanish and mestizo population of the area. As early as 1603, Juan Garcia is mentioned in the Guatemalan archives as having made a romeria (pilgrimage) to El Cristo Negro de Esquipulas. On his return journey, he found three stones near the Rio Tepoctum. As a reward for his pilgrimage, the document states, "that the stones turned into blocks of gold." (3)

In 1618, a Spaniard named Pedro Ruiz was cured of twenty open ulcers on his feet after visiting the shrine of Esquipulas. (4) Incidents of this nature were reported to be on the increase, and as a result, long lines of ailing pilgrims waited at the shrine to be cured.

Early records show several hundred testimonies of men and women cured of such afflictions and diseases as paralysis, malaria, tetanus, rabies, insanity, blindness and muteness. These same archival testimonies also document miraculous intervention from death by bandits, storms, shipwreck or war.

Slowly, the elements of native worship were amalgamated with Christian ceremonialism. In 1737, the miraculous healing power of El Cristo Negro was officially recognized by the Catholic Church. Don Pedro Pardo de Figueroa, the Archbishop of Guatemala, was cured of a contagious disease during a visit to the shrine.

In gratitude, the Archbishop ordered the construction of a massive baroque church and the placement of the crucifix of Our Lord of Esquipulas on the main altar. To this day, it remains the site of a holy place blessed by the Mother Church. (5)

La tierra bendita (the blessed earth) also attracted pilgrims to the shrine of Esquipulas. The site was well known in pre-Hispanic times for its curative powers, which were attributed to the hot springs, the

miraculous mud, and the water of El Rio de los Milagros.

The practice of eating earth and the belief in the miraculous powers of the earth proceed recorded time. The Aztecs, for example, ate thick layered cakes (tecuitlatl) for curative purposes and also took solemn oaths using a ritual practice accompanied by kissing and swallowing the earth.

The custom of earth eating has been accepted by the Catholic Church and in most areas of Latin America where it is practiced. The earth that is eaten takes the form of benditos, small cakes of sacred clay pressed into forms about two inches long and an inch wide. They are often stamped with embossed pictures of the saints, the Virgin, and in this case, Our Lord of Esquipulas. The benditos are blessed by the priest and are eaten or dissolved in water by the faithful in the belief that they will cure stomach, heart, and eye diseases and assure easy childbirth and a safe pregnancy. (6)

It appears that throughout New Spain the practice of eating and using blessed earth for curative purposes has become closely associated with the cult of Esquipulas and it also seems safe to assume that the custom of using tierra bendita had its roots in the pre-Columbian past and was later adapted by Spanish Catholics.

News of the miraculous powers of El Cristo Negro spread rapidly throughout the New World. Cults can still be found today in Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Costa Rica and Mexico. Gradually, stories of the miraculous image reached the frontiers of northern New Spain and eventually arrived in Nuevo Mejico.

By the turn of the nineteenth century, in 1805, the name Juan de Esquipulas appeared in the baptismal records of the Santa Cruz parish in northern New Mexico. In 1810, a small hermita was built to venerate a wooden crucifix found by Bernardo Abeita, which according to local legend, contained miraculous powers.

Later, Abeita received permission from the Bishop of Durango to build a chapel in honor of the miraculous image. Abeita completed the construction of the Santuario de Chimayo in 1816. (7)

Although the actual image of El Cristo Negro in Chimayo is not black, it has been credited with miraculous healing powers similar to its counterparts in other areas of Latin America. Remarkably, the healing power it possesses is also associated with la tierra bendita, which comes from a posito (hole) on the left side of the main altar.

How the cult of Our Lord of Esquipulas arrived in New Mexico remains a mystery. It is known that pilgrims and merchants covered great distances and that regular trade routes were established between New Mexico and Mexico during the colonial period. Correspondence in the Santa Cruz parish records

indicates that Abeita had first-hand knowledge of the image and cult of Esquipulas in Guatemala. He was also aware of the healing powers of the blessed earth and associated these powers with the sacred mud in Chimayo.

The origin and development of the cult of Esquipulas followed similar patterns of development in Chimayo, as it did in Guatemala. Legends of the Pueblo Indians of the Rio Grande valley indicate that the site of the Santuario was an Indian shrine. Chimayo was a place in ancient times where fire, smoke, and hot water emerged from the earth.

According to Tewa Indian legends, twin war gods killed a giant on this location, and as a result, fire burst out in many places. The heat dried the hot springs and left only mud. Indians of the area visited the site and used the mud for healing and curing ailments.

When the Spanish arrived in the valley, they soon recognized the sanctity the Indians placed on Chimayo. But only when Bernardo Abeita introduced Our Lord of Esquipulas to the valley was the site actually recognized by the Catholic Church.

There are many legends that describe the introduction of the cult of Esquipulas in New Mexico, and more specifically in the area known as El Potrero where the Santuario is located. A granddaughter of Bernardo Abeita described one popular legend as follows:

“During Holy Week, my grandfather, a leading member of los Hermanos, was performing the customary penances of the society at el Potrero. Suddenly, he saw a bright light shining from a hole in the ground near the Santa Cruz river. He rushed to the spot and with his bare hands dug out the crucifix of Our Lord of Esquipulas. Then he called all the people of the village to see the miraculous discovery and to venerate the cross. A procession was organized, and the crucifix was taken downstream to the parish church in Santa Cruz. There, it was placed in a nicho (niche) on the main altar.”

“The next morning, the crucifix had disappeared from the church and was later found in the posito where it was originally discovered. Another procession was formed, and the cross was returned to Santa Cruz. Again it disappeared and was found in the hole at El Potrero. When this happened for the third time, the people understood that the crucifix wished to remain at El Potrero in Chimayo. To venerate the holy cross, a chapel was built over the hole.” (8)

Over the generations, the Santuario evolved into a popular shrine known throughout the southwest. Mexican, and later French clergy, recognized its importance to Holy Mother Church. For years, the Santuario was respectfully cared for by the Chavez family of Chimayo. Then, in 1929, Santa Fe artist Gustave Baumann heard that some kind of piecemeal

sale of the furnishings and artwork was underway. Apparently, the Chavez family had fallen on hard times and desperately needed the income from the sale.

Baumann alerted the Santa Fe art colony to this potential crisis and he, Frank Applegate, and Santa Fe New Mexican editor, E. Dana Johnson, launched a massive publicity campaign to save the Santuario. They contacted the noted writer Mary Austin, who in turn solicited six-thousand dollars from Olivia Murray Cutting, the mother of New Mexico’s former senator, Bronson Cutting. This group, along with other dedicated New Mexicans, bought the famous chapel and turned it over to the Society for the Preservation and Restoration of New Mexico Churches. This group of pioneer preservationists gave the deed to the Santuario to the Archdiocese of Santa Fe. (9)

Much of the credit for the increased popularity of the Santuario in recent times belongs to Father Casimiro Roca, who has officiated as pastor of the Santuario since 1954. In the decades that he has served the parish, he has witnessed a resurgence in the exaltation of this important religious shrine.

Father Roca, who in his words, “is in a semi-state of retirement,” begins his day with the mayordomos (caretakers) of the chapel at 7:00 a.m. Mass is celebrated in the morning, and the candles on the altar are changed daily. Throughout the day, he greets a constant stream of pilgrims, visiting with them, asking where they are from, and assuring them that he will pray for their intentions. Sometimes he will hear their confessions, and on other occasions, he will tell them a capsulized history of the Santuario and the valley of Chimayo.

“For Holy Week, we average thirty thousand pilgrims on Good Friday,” he explains. “And on the coldest day in winter, at least fifty stop by to pray. On weekends in the summer, as many as three thousand people will find their way to the Santuario.”

When asked about the powers of la tierra santa, Father Roca readily admits that he and his assistants fill the posito with holy dirt. “I bless the soil,” he says. “And I tell the people that it is not the dirt that cures, but their faith. I tell them to take some dirt as a memory of their visit to the Santuario.” (10)

Historians who have studied Chimayo’s history are fond of pointing out that the valley’s first inhabitants, the Tewa, called this place Tsimayo, which in their language meant a place with “flaking stone of superior quality.” (11) Since that time, Chimayo has evolved into a place of far greater importance. For the descendants of the first inhabitants, the thousands of pilgrims who visit each year, and for the New Mexicans who have remained, it will always be known as la tierra bendita.

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Michael Miller grew up in northern New Mexico. He has written several books on New Mexico including the recently published Monuments of Adobe. He is currently working with the Pueblo of Picuris on a book about the restoration of the mission of San Lorenzo. He lives with his family in La Puebla.

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The Red Swan: Myths and Tales of the American Indians
Edited by John Bierhorst
Published April 28, 1992
Price: \$14.95
Binding: Paper
The University of New Mexico Press

This book is a teacher's and serious student's dream! This observation is the direct result of my reaction to the book's method of organization.

The introduction, albeit lengthy (31 pages), defines myth and enters into a lengthy discussion on this topic. For the teacher, this introduction could serve as a valuable teaching tool. The serious student, on the other hand, could benefit from this dissection of valuable literary genre. Even the casual reader interested in gaining an understanding of Native American myths and tales would find this section valuable if he cares to take the time and effort to sample the pages.

For those who find the introduction just too lengthy, even reading the myths and tales themselves is well worth the time and effort. The stories are told in easy-to-understand English, and represent tribes from throughout the world, including well-known and obscure cultural groups.

The 275 pages of text present the tales and myths, and are divided into 15 distinct topics. The first two sections deal with the beginning of all existence, the creation. It continues through the life cycle discussing man, virtue, vice, the seasons, animals and a myriad of other themes. Death, loss or deprecation, remedied by a journey to the other world and even beyond death as a prelude to revitalization all round out the stories. At the beginning of each section, the editor offers clear-cut explanations as to the contents and importance of the section.

The notes at the end of the book also offer explanations about the myths. Moreover, most tales are short and can be read in a relatively short time.

Because of the short length of each piece, the interesting style in which the book is written and the excellent organization, this "must read" selection provides an interesting diversion and an intelligent insight into the Native American culture.

-Kathy Cordova

(Continued on page 14)

TAOSENOS ALSO DEFENDED THE UNION

By Jerry Padilla

The conflict which erupted in 1861 between loyal Union states and the seceding Confederacy, spanning a large part of the continent, would plunge this nation into perhaps its darkest hours, and lasted five years. Known as the American Civil War, it was generations in the making. It can be called a conflict of the clash of political institutions and lifestyles. On opposing sides were the agriculturally oriented South and the largely industrialized North, to extend their respective lifestyles into the newly acquired territories in the West. States' rights and slavery issues only added fuel to a long simmering feud waiting to erupt.

New Mexico had been acquired as a result of the war between the United States and Mexico under the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo.

Taos, the largely Hispanic village nestled at the base of the Sangre De Cristo mountains and the southern spur of the Rocky Mountain chain, (though far removed from the center of the conflict), would have many of its citizens drawn into it. Long-time neighbors to the Pueblo de San Geronimo de Taos, the area was well known as a rendezvous point for trading among trappers and traders from both North and South and to Mexican and Missouri merchants and nomadic tribal groups. Americans had not yet immigrated to New Mexico in large numbers, although individuals had been present since the early 19th century.

In 1861, the Territory of New Mexico comprised of present day New Mexico, Arizona and part of southern Colorado. Economic interests intensified regional conflicts. While Santa Fe and Taos were largely economically dependent on the Missouri trade and Chihuahua, Arizona was tied to Texas. When secession from the Union became a fact, Santa Fe waited to see what Missouri would do, while influ-

ential people in Arizona and extreme southern New Mexico wanted to follow Texas in secession.

Confederate sympathizers were not strangers in Taos and the North, and were aware, as was Southern leadership of the value of the West, particularly New Mexico, Coahuila, Chihuahua, Sonora and Arizona for resources and manpower, and California for a coastline free from Union blockades and the wealth of the gold fields. The South needed the gold in order to buy arms and supplies. The conquest of the West would greatly enhance their status in Europe as a world power.

On February 4, 1861, the Texas Legislature passed an ordinance to secure the friendship and cooperation of New Mexico and delegated Simeon Hart and Philemon Herbert as commissioners to the Territory, for the express purpose of stirring up secession here. Hart and Herbert traveled from Taos to La Mesilla and Tucson contacting sympathizers, and soon advised that the people of Arizona and New Mexico were ready to join forces with Texas and the South.

Surely Hart referred to only those secessionists who were relatively recent arrivals to the Territory. The native Hispanos and pro-Union people must not have drawn much attention to themselves to avoid duress in an already difficult environment. The groundwork was being laid for securing the Territory of New Mexico by Confederates, mainly Texans.

Sentiments in Taos soon polarized after secessionists began harassing pro-Union men. That summer, the usually even-tempered citizens, led by Christopher "Kit" Carson, Pablo Jaramillo and his male relatives, Smith Simpson, and Jose and Santiago Valdez, seethed with anger. A crowd of Confederate sympathizers had torn down the U.S. flag

and raised a Confederate Stars and Bars in its place, above the town's central plaza. These leaders of the community quickly put a stop to this.

Carson, succeeding Colonel Ceran St. Vrain as commander of the 1st New Mexico Volunteer Infantry Regiment, and fellow officers and neighbors, would not allow this outrage. They nailed an American flag to a cottonwood pole and raised it in the center of the plaza. Facing the crowd, Carson declared that Taos had been Union since the territory was won from Mexico in 1848, "and will stay Union." Pro-Union townspeople took turns guarding the flag, day and night, which resulted in a tradition, continuing to the present day, in which the flag flies continuously at all times, being lowered only to be replaced.

The federal government in Washington launched efforts to secure the West by mobilizing volunteers - like Carson and his New Mexicans - wherever found, training, arming, and sending them on campaigns, intended to bind the region to the Union cause.

Although there were few blacks in New Mexico, the legislature had passed a Slave Code in 1859, and secessionists controlled the southern and western halves of the territory.

In the spring of 1861, Texas Confederates of the 2nd Texas Mounted Rifles and led by Lt. Col. John R. Baylor, occupied Fort Bliss and El Paso to guard against a Union invasion from New Mexico. At this time, there was little danger of any action coming from there. After a rash of defections by Southern officers from New Mexico's forts, Lt. Col. Edward R.S. Canby had taken charge of the Dept. in Santa Fe. As Baylor's force occupied Fort Bliss, he ordered the reinforcing of Fort Fillmore, near La Mesilla, and asked the governor, Abraham Rencher, for volunteers.

Carson and the 1st New Mexico responded. Carson was appointed because of his ability to speak Spanish. The vast majority of New Mexico's volunteers were Hispanics, not only from Taos, but from all over the north and the San Luis Valley of Colorado. Some Pueblo Indians served as scouts and guides.

Carson, among others such as Francisco P. Abreu, Miguel Pino of Santa Fe, and Manuel Antonio Chaves of the Rio Abajo, helped raise five regiments of volunteers and several companies of militia. Every man and boy who could carry a gun joined. Pro-Unionists declared that the Texans had evil intentions on the Hispanos' lives, wives and property. It became a matter of honor, whether locals really cared for or understood the issues of the war. Texans were again invading New Mexico, and that was reason enough.

Joining in the cause from Taos as commanders in the 1st New Mexico Volunteers were Capt. Santiago Valdez, (later replaced due to ill health by Capt. Edward Bergman), Lt. Jose Manuel Martinez (who led Company H), and Capt. Charles Deus led a company recruited in the northern Taos county and the San Luis area.

Don Jose Maria Valdez had initially captained Company A, but resigned in order to accept an appointment as Lt. Col. and commander of the 3rd New Mexico Volunteers, the first mounted regiment. Joining him in this regiment were Capt. Buenaventura Lovato, Company I, and other Taosenos, Capt. Ricardo Branch and his brother Alfredo Branch of Company B, and Capt. Pedro Sanchez leading Company C.

Captain William D. Simpson and Lt. Antonio Mascarenas formed Simpson's Independent Mounted Spies and Guides. Gabriel Jeantete and Aniceto Valdez commanded

Company D, 1st New Mexico Militia, the equivalent of today's National Guard.

After training, the volunteers' units were garrisoned and sent patrolling in the vicinity of Fort Craig, near present day Socorro.

On July 23, Baylor's Texans advanced into Mesilla, to be welcomed by the southern leaning population. By July 27, he had occupied Fort Fillmore, which had been abandoned by Federal Major Isaac Lynde, who retreated to Fort Stanton. Soon his meager, demoralized force had been captured by Baylor.

With the exception of the isolated volunteer force, augmented by a few hundred regulars, no Union force was present in southern New Mexico. The road to California was open.

In January of 1862, Henry Hopkins Sibley, having formerly served in New Mexico, and brother-in-law of Col. Canby, the Union Commander, led three regiments of mounted Texas volunteers at Fort Thorn, Texas and joined forced with Baylor.

Canby waited to face Sibley at Fort Craig, with his volunteer and regular force, including the Taosenos.

On February 16, Sibley found the fort too strong to attack, crossed the Rio Grande at the east bank, and bypassed the fort, to recross the Rio at Valverde. This plan would have left Fort Craig's defenders isolated in a remote bastion.

Canby decided to attack, and at dawn on February 21, 1862, the first action of the first major encounter of the American Civil War in the Southwest began. In the forefront of the Union force probing the Confederate position to block the Texan advance were Lt. Col. Jose Maria Valdez' mounted volunteers, joined by two of Kit Carson's mounted companies led by Lt. Col. Benjamin Roberts with his regular cavalry and artillery.

Captain Rafael Chacon, Company K, 1st New Mexico Volunteers, whose memoirs were recently edited by Jaqueline Dorgan Meketa in Legacy of Honor. The Life of Rafael Chacon. A Nineteenth Century New Mexican, quoted him, "on February 21, before sunrise, Graydon (Captain James Graydon of Graydon's Independent Mounted Volunteers, from Socorro and Fort Buchanan, Arizona), and I were given orders to go and accompany a heavy battery under...Col. Roberts to impede the passage of the enemy at the Valverde ford,...after we crossed we encountered an enemy advance guard and they received us with a substantial discharge from their carbines, which lasted about an hour... we responded to their fire and made them retreat."

Chacon, from the Mora area, noted in his memoirs that on either side of his company were the companies of Taosenos, Ricardo Branch and Pedro Sanchez (Captains). As the battle increased in intensity about 11:00 a.m., the Texans' attack led by Major Charles Pyron and Lt. Col. William Scurry, occupied a cottonwood grove on the east bank. To counter them, Union Captain Henry Selden brought up Union reinforcements, including Carson's eight volunteer companies and a company of Colorado Volunteers. This combined force went upstream, and in a fierce bayonet charge, drove a force of dismounted Confederates from the woods, and repelled a counterattack by a company of Texan lancers.

Encouraged by their initial success, Roberts crossed his artillery to the east bank. Under Texan Colonel Thomas Green, who replaced a supposedly drunk Sibley, the Texans fought back furiously, beating off Federal attacks by regulars and volunteers until the late afternoon, eventually overcoming the Federal artillery position.

Canby had taken command of the Union forces at about 3:00 p.m. Up to now, Union commanders Duncan, Selden with Taosenos Carson and Valdez had held their own. Canby withdrew Carson's regiment and ordered it and the 2nd New Mexican Volunteers to join an assault on the Texan left. Carson's regiment quickly moved into position along with some dismounted Federal cavalry, met a charge of about 200 Texans and hurled it back.

On the other flank, according to Canby's account, two companies of the 2nd New Mexico abandoned their position, "demoralizing in turn a company of the 7th Infantry (Regular), sending us reeling."

When a Federal counterattack failed, Canby withdrew to Fort Craig. It was clearly a Confederate victory snatched from the jaws of defeat.

Eventually, the Confederates bypassed Fort Craig, and occupied Albuquerque and Santa Fe. Only their defeat at Glorieta Pass east of Santa Fe in March of 1862, (at the hands of the Colorado Volunteers under Colonel Gabriel Slough and Major John Chivington, accompanied by assorted New Mexican volunteers) stopped them from taking New Mexico for the Confederacy.

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My special thanks to Mike Stauffer, reporter and one of the editors of The Taos News, for sharing his information and texts on Civil War history.

Jerry Padilla is the Spanish editor of the Taos News. He researches, translates and writes historical articles in addition to his work on the newspaper.





THE HOLIDAY SEASON AT TAOS PUEBLO: A Blend of Two Beliefs

By Rick Romancito

Coming home for the Christmas holiday carries a special significance for Taos Pueblo tribal members. Of course, it is a time when families and friends get together and when lots of delicious food is prepared and the Christian message of hope is observed.

But as the centuries have passed, a dual system of belief has developed in which tribal members pray to not only the God and Jesus and the saints of believers worldwide, they also look to the religion that nurtured their ancestors for hundreds of years before European colonists brought the ideal of one God with them.

It would presume too much to ask which of the two is considered more important to them because, in terms of their faith, no contest exists. The religions are, to many, simply two ways of looking at the same thing.

Still, it's difficult to examine or label the elements of something that has to be experienced to be understood, like the sight of the rising black smoke from the bonfires set out across the village plaza on Christmas Eve; the sharp crack of a rifle shot at the head of the procession bearing the statue of the Virgin; or the reverent hum of the people following and watching, lighted by the flickering fires and billowing sparks in the air.

Just before the procession begins, one feels an aura of expectation among the visitors and Pueblo residents, a sensation that something important is about to begin, a gut feeling felt even in those who may never step into a church or kiva. As the stacks of pitchwood are arranged, people begin to huddle in groups to keep warm. A few years ago, the temperature was hovering at 26 degrees below zero, and still

the plaza was crowded with people. These rituals observed by the Pueblos are never cancelled on account of the weather. They are part of an important cycle that continues beyond whatever humans might feel.

Christianity may require attendance at church ceremonies, but the native religion has no such boundaries. It is the proper way to behave in the world, and it is such a constant companion to initiated members that among most Pueblos there's no word that specifically identifies the concept of religion. There are simply things one must do to be a human being on the Earth. The ceremonials and rituals conducted during each season are part of a cycle that was going on when Jesus was walking the sands of the Middle East. As such, they are performed each year at a specific time and in a certain way, so that harmony is maintained in the natural order of things.

Most visitors, however, tend to regard the dances with the opinion that somehow they are performed for their benefit alone; that the European concept of theater is at work in which a superficial singular performance is created which has no meaning other than that which is readily observed. The reality is much more profound.

Non-Indians will be frustrated, however, because the people of Taos Pueblo do not disclose their basic religious beliefs and will not explain the meaning of the dances and ceremonials. This is because to open the door to scrutiny any wider than it has already been thrown invites unwanted interpretation and self-indulgent speculation which benefits no one but the ego belonging to the one who thinks he understands.

The deer dance, buffalo dance and turtle dance, performed at this time of year, are special to the people of Taos Pueblo, but also to the world, for each ceremony is not as single event. It is related to all that goes before it, and after it. It is part of the cycle, the cycle that continues to turn whether there are visitors to observe the dances or not. Many tribal members have said that even if the gates were closed to outsiders during this time of year, the dances would go on, unchanged.

At some Pueblos in the Southwest, some native religious ceremonials have had to be restricted to observance only by Indian people in order to preserve this purity. The Shalako dances at Zuni and some of the Kachina dances among the Hopi villages were in danger of becoming offensive circuses because of the irrelevant behavior among the large numbers of non-Indians and some tribal members in attendance. It would not be surprising if, because similar things could happen here, restrictions like these were imposed.

The dances at Taos Pueblo during the Christmas season are certainly deeply affecting, perhaps because they represent something primal and lost from Western thought. For whatever reason, they are still available to be seen and experienced, for now.

Rick Romancito is a photographer and part-time writer for the Taos News. He writes a column, "La Historia," for the newspaper.



MEMORIES OF PAST CHRISTMASSES

Contributed by Josephine M. Cordova

In the past, during my parents' early years, people celebrated Christmas in a very different way than we do today.

Christmas time was not a time for buying and spending your last penny. It was a time for worship, people getting ready for the coming of the Messiah, Christ our King. The four weeks of Advent were important for everyone who was brought up in the Catholic faith. With the celebration of Our Lady of Guadalupe on the 12th of December, people began to prepare for the greatest festival of the year, Christmas, or the Nativity.

Pigs were butchered, and friars were prepared for the nine days of Christmas.

My mother did not own a Frigidaire, but she had a little house inside the Arroyo Seco River. It was covered with screen wire, and it had shelves. Here, she always kept her food nice and fresh.

The pig's head was cleaned and boiled. My mother cooked the meat. She ground it, flavored it with minced onions and made head cheese from it. Empanaditas were made from the pork she cooked for three hours. My mother ground the meat and sweetened it. She added pinon nuts and also raisins and spices. She made dough and made meat turnovers or empanaditas. Her

apple pies, posole and many other dishes were ready for the Celebration. My mother's brothers and their families came every year to celebrate Christmas with us. During the year, my mother had made many quilts and table cloths, and many other gifts for those who came.

On the 16th of December, we would all go to the mountains to get a Christmas tree.

My mother made popcorn from the corn she raised in the garden. We strung the popcorn and decorated the tree.

Under the tree, my mother placed the animals she had made for the children who came to spend Christmas with us.

When I was four years old, my mother went to Posner's Store to buy gifts for our guests. She bought a winding toy for one of our cousins who lived about one half mile from our house. It was one of the most beautiful toys that I ever saw when I was a child.

On the 16th of December, many schoolboys would wear masks and go visit the houses where luminarias were lit. The masked boys (abuelos) would come to our yard and dance around the luminarias. They made us kneel and pray the Ave Maria. After the abuelos danced, we knelt down to pray to Our Father and recite the Ave Maria once again.

My mother invited the masked young men to come into our house for the feast she prepared for them every night during the nine days before Christmas.

We celebrated Christmas at home. In the evening, our guests left. They happily took the gifts we gave them.

Before the holidays were over, my uncle and aunt invited us to go to their house for dinner.

When we went back home, my mother found out that I had stolen the beautiful toy that my mother had given to my cousin. When my father found out what I had done, he took a switch and he made me walk all the way back to my relatives to return the stolen toy. Never again during my lifetime did I take things that did not belong to me. I learned a lesson the hard way.

At dawn on Christmas morning, the kids from the neighborhood would come asking for Christmas gifts.

They sang:

Oremos oremos
Angelitos semos
Del cielo vinemos
A pedir oremos
y si no nos dan

Puertas y ventanas quebraremos.

I believe Christmas Day is the most important day of the year. It is a commemoration of the coming of Our Lord.

Josephine Cordova is a retired teacher and school administrator. She was the Historical Society's Honoree of the Year in 1991.



TAOS COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY AIDS IN PRESERVATION PROJECT

By Mildred Bruder Buchanan, Chairman
Historic Preservation Committee
Taos County Historical Society

On August 20, 1992, Mr. Sam Baca, Director of Churches: Symbols of Community, New Mexico Community Foundation, was informed that the Board of Directors of the Taos County Historical Society had voted to give a \$100.00 contribution to the restoration of the Neo-Gothic San Rafael Church (1865) at La Cueva, New Mexico.

He replied with gratitude for our gift and for our interest in this project and assured us it was much needed and will be put to good use. "This important work would not be possible without support, such as yours. You are not only preserving a beautiful building, but helping to strengthen a community."

According to the Bylaws

(February 1, 1992), the Historic Preservation Committee is responsible for recommending to the Board how money shall be expended. Each project must be reviewed by the Committee and findings presented in writing to the Board, who will make the final decision.

Funding for the Historic Preservation Program is derived from gifts and memorials made by members and friends, and maintained as a separate fund. Beginning in 1991, the Board voted to give \$100.00 each year from the General Fund to the Historic Preservation Committee to further its program. This year, we are happy to report the choice of the San Rafael Church on the National Register of Historic Places.

Father Walter Cassidy, instrumental in organizing the group which heads the restoration of the San Rafael Church in La Cueva, recently celebrated his golden jubilee (50th) anniversary of priesthood. The highlight of the celebration included a Mass on July 4, 1992. The Taos County Historical Society congratulates this friend of cultural preservation.



**To the Foot of the Rainbow: A Tale of
Twenty-five Hundred Miles of Wandering
Through the Southwest Enchanted Land**

by Clyde Kluckhohn

Published February 25, 1992

Price: \$15.95

Binding: Paper

The University of New Mexico Press

This is a reprint of a book first published in 1927 by Century Co. of New York. The author, a Princeton undergraduate at the time, was sent to the Southwest's dry climate as he was thought "sickly." He was later to become an anthropologist. The author made an astonishing trip by horseback, sometimes alone and often with others, from Albuquerque to Santa Fe, to Taos, then westward from Santa Fe to the Parajito Plateau, Frijoles Canyon, Jemez, Canyon de Chelly and finally, he sought out the Weatherhills at Keyneta, Arizona. With their direction, he made the difficult trip to the Rainbow Bridge located in northern Arizona. On the way home from the Rainbow, he rode toward Flagstaff and the train that would take him back east, so necessarily passed by the Grand Canyon.

The author uses what, today, we consider racist terminology for the Native American and the New Mexico population of Hispanic ancestry, and he also has a tendency to spell place names phonetically rather than correctly. Sadly, he spends an inordinate amount of time telling the reader about the various horses he rides and his lack of skill as a camper in the West. He behaves like one who has no experience with riding a trail cross-country, and he recounts his many blunders.

It's a charming book, in spite of the stilted writing style typical of the era. For details of a fantastic summer trip in the mid-twenties, which was a much more innocent age, do enjoy this volume. The illustrations are muddy and poorly developed and printed, but they do give you some idea of the rigors of the trip.

-Fayne Lutz

A Brief History of Taos

by F.R. Bob Romero and Neil Poese

Published 1992

Binding: Paper

Kit Carson Historic Museums

You might have thought it impossible to squeeze the history of Taos into 28 pages. Brief it is, but this little book is well done and answers the

need for a concise overview of the history of Taos Valley. Bob Romero, director of Taos Educational Center, and Neil Poese, director of the Kit Carson Historic Museums, have done a good job of condensing Taos History into a reference handbook.

The history is organized into time periods, beginning with Taos Pueblo, and continuing with sections on Spanish Colonial days, the "Mexican Period" through 1846, and "United States Sovereignty" to the present.

Of necessity, in such a short book, much important history is given only a paragraph or two. But overall, the book is accurate and comprehensive. A page in the back offers a list of suggested books for more details on the turbulent history of this area.

I don't believe this book is just for tourists. It's a handy reference book that should be in every Taos home. It might be a nice Christmas present for children, to whet their interest in local history.

The authors sum up Taos history well: "In general, the history of Taos constitutes cycles of recurring 'invasions,' or influxes of different peoples with running undercurrents of resistance to domination by the most recent newcomers."

-Judy Romero-Oak

Miss O'Keeffe

by Christine Taylor Patten and Alvaro Cardona-Hine

Published April 9, 1992

Price: \$16.95

Binding: Cloth

University of New Mexico Press

This is a fascinating little book written by one of the nurse-companions of Georgia O'Keeffe in collaboration with Alvaro Cardona-Hine. Christine Taylor Patten was hired to take care of O'Keeffe during the famous woman's final year, at the age of 96.

It has an easy flow to it, with Christine's day-to-day memories of caring for the aging and fragile woman and how, through the weeks and months, she grew very fond of her charge and felt very protective toward her. It reveals O'Keeffe as a human being of "profound grace and dignity." At her advanced age, she was nearly blind, hard of hearing and in delicate health. She loved her Abiquiu home and longed to see Ghost Ranch, but more and more she became confined to her home. She eventually was moved to a large estate in Santa Fe, and from then on, life was never the same for her or for her nurse-companion, Christine. They missed the quiet of Abiquiu and their pleasant walks in the patio of O'Keeffe's large home. The move was directed by Juan Hamilton, and it is obvious that Christine did not feel his



judgement was in O'Keeffe's best interest. Eventually, Juan and Christine had a run-in and she packed up and left. He banned her from visiting O'Keeffe and they never saw each other again. Christine is an artist and found inspiration in the surroundings of O'Keeffe's Abiquiu home.

The book presents a story of the warm relationship that the two women established during their 18 months together, and gives the reader an insight to an O'Keeffe very few people know.

-Sadie O. Knight

Style Trends of Pueblo Pottery, 1500-1840
by H.P. Mera
Introduction by Jonathan Batkin
Published February 17, 1992
Originally published 1939
Price: \$29.95
Binding: Paper
The University of New Mexico Press

If you want a quick, educational read into both the worlds of art and history, this is it. Those wishing to spend more time delving into the finer points of the book, you'll benefit, too. In essence, this publication offers something for everyone.

According to the preface, initial inquiries of Wheelwright Museum (Santa Fe) and Southwest Museum (Los Angeles) recommended this book as an authority on pueblo pottery. The University of New Mexico Press, impressed with this enthusiasm, made

the decision to republish the original version in its entirety.

H.P. Mera first published this report for the Laboratory of Anthropology in Santa Fe. His report focused, not only on a specific time period, but on the pottery of the Rio Grande and Little Colorado

Cultural Areas. The well-organized book is divided into three distinct areas: Development of Form, Description and A Trend in Decoration. Furthermore, clear pictures with sketched details of the ornamentation, from the plates which accompany the description of the pottery. Additional information, such as form and special use of the particular piece of pottery, also helps the reader understand more about the topic.

This book is easy to follow, very informative, and a "must read" for pottery collectors, art lovers and history buffs.

-Kathy Cordova

Life In the Pueblos
by Ruth Underhill
Published 1992
Binding: Paper
Ancient City Press, Santa Fe

This is a reprint of "Workaday Life in the Pueblos," first published by the Bureau of Indian Affairs in 1946. It was the result of anthropologist Ruth Underhill's work with the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

The book was written for children as an educational tool, and it's interesting to adults as well. It goes into almost every detail of Pueblo life, including games for leisure time, which tell a great deal about a culture.

Underhill starts with a description of the Pueblo people and what makes them different from other North American tribes, and makes it clear that the Pueblos had a sophisticated civilization with large cities long before Europeans "discovered" them.

The book is beautifully done, with precise drawings and photographs of Pueblo food, crops, ceremonial dances, clothing and traditions. It's a good reference book for your library, and would make a nice gift for friends and relatives who would like a better understanding of the Pueblos.

-Judy Romero-Oak





Dr. Herbert W. Dick, who served as Taos County Historical Society president for two years, passed away on July 10, 1992, after a lengthy illness.

He received his B.A. degree from the University of New Mexico, and his M.A. and Ph.D. degrees from Harvard University. He received employment at the University of Colorado Museum, and taught anthropology at Trinidad Junior College and Adams State College. Following his retirement from Adams State, he taught on a part time basis for Northern New Mexico Community College.

His survivors include his wife Martha of Los Cordovas, son Matthew of New Haven, Connecticut, and daughter Katherine of Alamosa, Colorado.



Photo Credits: Front and Back Covers, Kit Carson Historic Museums. Taos Guadalupe Church, our own local monument of adobe, was built in 1762 and torn down in 1911. Father Joseph Giraud, a Frenchman, was the parish priest that ordered it demolished. The cracked buttress dates this between 1904 and

1911. In 1902, the wall measured 3 to 4 feet thick. The first roof was flat, but a pitched roof was added in the 1870's. The church also had a small yard used as a cemetery. The church took one summer and the fall of 1911 to rebuild. 50 years later, in 1961, it burned down. Photo donated to the Museums by Mrs. Bert Saavedra.

Page 3, El Santuario de Chimayo, Arsenio Cordova.

Page 10, Taos Pueblo, Gabriel Romero, Romero/Taos Publishing.

Page 13, San Rafael Church in La Cueva, New Mexico, Corina Santistevan.

The president, Virgil Gutierrez, resigned in July and vice-president Sadie Knight took over as president.

The monthly meeting for January, 1993, will be on the second Saturday, January 9th. Program to be announced.

The February 6th meeting will be the Annual Meeting. Election of new officers and appointment of board members to fill vacancies will take place. Meetings will be at the Masonic Hall at 2:00 p.m. unless otherwise announced.

Kit Carson: Indian Fighter or Indian Killer?

The Kit Carson Historic Museums are sponsoring a symposium on this intriguing subject next Summer, July 31, 1993, at the Town of Taos Convention Center. Presenters include Darlis Miller, R.C. Gordon-McCutchan, Lawrence Kelly, Marc Simmons, and Robert Utey. The symposium will also include a dinner to honor the 150th anniversary of Carson's purchase of his home here in Taos in 1843. For further information contact the Kit Carson Museum at 758-0505.