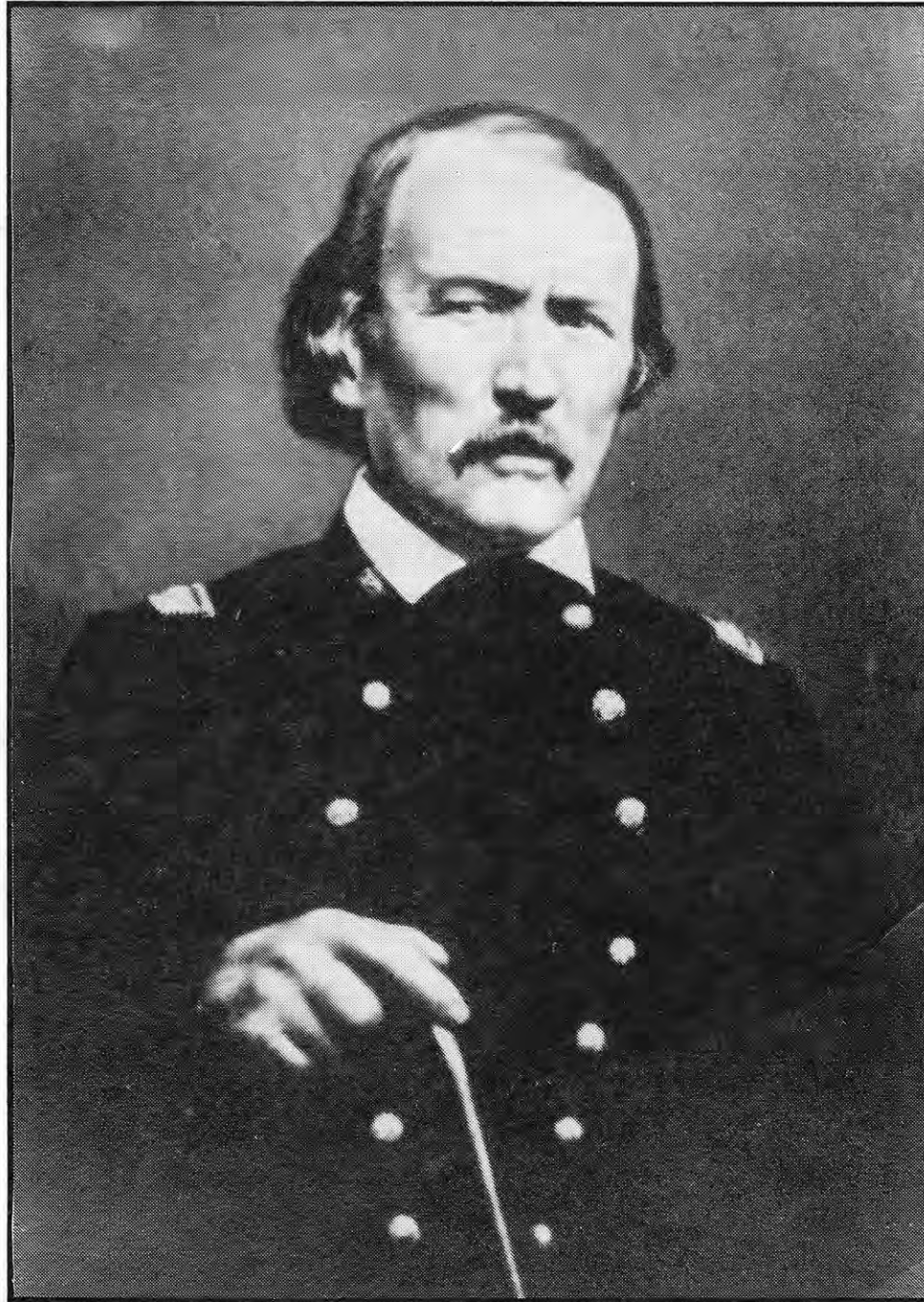


# *AYER Y HOY en Taos*

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



**\$3.00**

**Spring 1993**

## **Kit Carson: "Little Chief" and the Indians**

*A publication of the Taos County Historical Society*



## EDITOR'S PAGE

by *Kathy Cordova*

This spring's issue is loaded with items of historical interest, a fitting tribute to the changing of the seasons.

The date of the release of this publication also marks the date of the Taos County Historical Society's annual Honoree of the Year's Luncheon. This year, James B. Griffin, photographer and Los Cordovas resident, receives laurels for preserving the past by documenting churches and cemeteries in Arizona, New Mexico, Colorado and Texas and a complete set of the missions of Texas. He willingly shares his work with history buffs and simply states, "Now you can see how a hobby can grow," referring to his collections of over 300 photos and slides on each subject. It is very fitting that the *Ayer y Hoy* readership shares in its honoree's work. Enjoy Griffin's photos, only a brief glimpse of some of his careful documentation.

Dr. R.C. Gordon-McCutchan, acting director of the Kit Carson Historic Museums, shares his research and historical insights of the Indian scout for whom the museums are named. The submission of this article ushers in the advent of the 150th anniversary of Kit Carson's purchase of his home in Taos. In commemoration of this event, the museums plan a symposium on Kit Carson: Indian Fighter or Indian Killer? scheduled July 31, 1993, at the Taos Convention Center. The 1:30 to 5:00 p.m. schedules feature speakers Professor Darlis Miller of the New Mexico State University History department, acting museums' director Dr. R.C. Gordon-McCutchan and professor Lawrence Kelly of North Texas State. Cocktails from 5 to 6 and a banquet from 6 to 7:15 provide social stimulus for the evening. Then, Dr. Marc Simmons and Mr. Robert Utley will speak until approximately 9:30.

According to museum officials, the symposium's intent is to put to rest the misinformation regarding Kit Carson, particularly with the Navajo. Professor Emeritus Dr. Harvey Carter, the authority on Kit Carson, plans to participate as guest of honor.

The event is free to the public, although ticket reservations are required. Members of the public may reserve a slot by calling the Kit Carson Historic Museums' office at 758-0505 until July 30 on a first come, first serve basis, as seating is limited to 150.

It is always gratifying to share glimpses of the past through the eyes of knowledgeable persons in their fields. Glimpses of the matachines by Guadalupe Tafoya, Sadie Ortiz Knight's memories of the Santuario and author-in-search-of-a-publisher John Duncan's glimpses into the extinct Maidu tribe certainly add to the interest of this publication.

Plan to read our reviews and possibly find some exciting summer reading, and attend the society's well-organized field trips. May this issue keep your historical moments alive and well until we meet again on the pages of *Ayer y Hoy* in December, 1993.

### Table of Contents

"Little Chief" and the Indians	
by Dr. R.C. Gordon-McCutchan	3
Book Reviews	7
Santuario de Chimayo:	
A Personal Memory	
by Sadie Ortiz Knight	8
Moros y Cristianos: New Mexico	
Folk Plays	
by Guadalupe Tafoya	9
Excerpt: Tales of the Maidu	
by John Duncan	13
TCHS Honors Griffin	14
News and Notes	16

## ISSUE NO. 15: SPRING 1993

### *AYER Y HOY en Taos*

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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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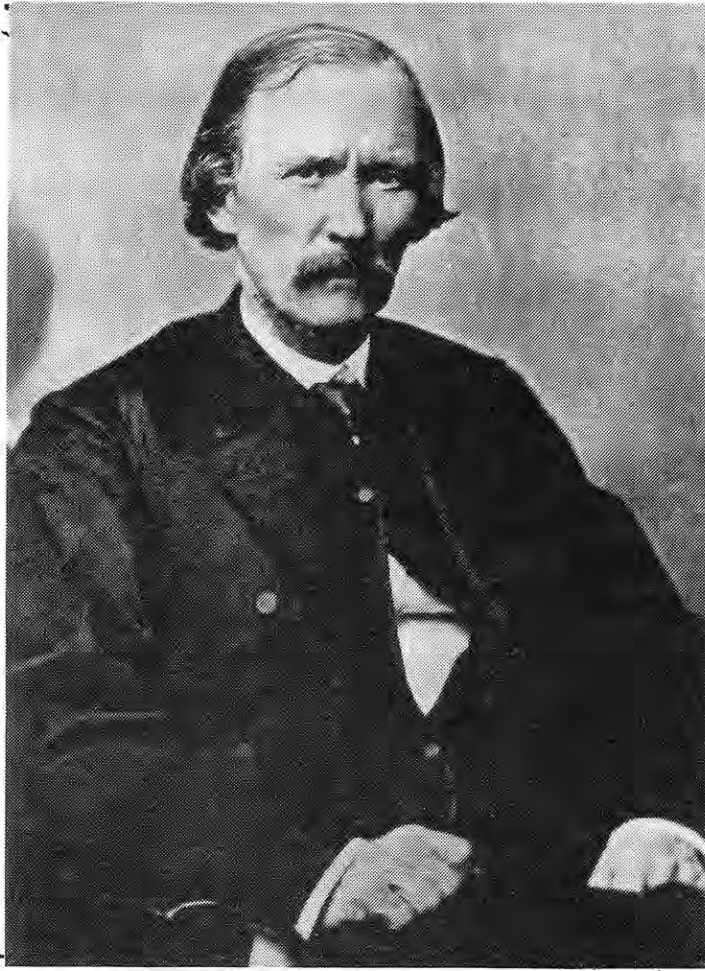
### EDITOR

Kathy Cordova

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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## “LITTLE CHIEF” AND THE INDIANS

By R.C. Gordon-McCutchan, Ph.D.

### PRESENTISM

It is a truism of history that present attitudes and cultural fashions shape our perceptions of the past, including the figures who played prominent parts in creating that past. In historical studies, "presentism," is defined as the passing of judgment on historical figures according to the standards of a later generation. Kit Carson is a good example of a historical figure whose current reputation is a victim of "presentism." His public image has changed dramatically in the past one hundred years with the changing of cultural attitudes and fashions.

In the 19th century Carson was a great hero--as a mountain man, scout, Indian fighter and Civil War officer he was widely perceived to have been one of the key heroic figures that helped "win" the West. Today, by contrast, many revile Carson primarily because they consider him to have been a part of the mistreatment of Amerindians that has often characterized American history. Today, if you ask a reasonably well-educated individual if they have ever heard of Kit Carson, they are likely to reply, "Yes, he was an Indian killer, wasn't he?" If you asked the same question a hundred years ago, the likely answer would have been, "Of course, he was a great Indian fighter."

How different in meaning are these two expressions. To be called a great "Indian fighter" was a high compliment. The expression connoted fair play, courage, resourcefulness, physical strength, knowledge, skill, and a commitment to doing one's part to realize the nation's "manifest destiny." "Indian killer," by contrast, connotes treachery, racism, cultural chauvinism, brutality, and cold-blooded murder. Increased sympathy for and appreciation of Native Americans, in conjunction with re-examination of doctrines like "manifest destiny," have led directly to the change in perception of Kit Carson described above.

Which is the more historically accurate Kit Carson? That is, did Carson conduct his conflicts with Indians fairly, according to what we might loosely call the principles of "just warfare," or is he guilty of unjustifiable, cold-blooded murder? Was Kit Carson an honorable Indian fighter, or does he deserve to be called an "Indian killer?" An ancillary question concerns Carson's attitude toward Indians. Is it true that Carson was an Indian-hater who subscribed to the old saw that the only good one was a dead one, or had his years among the Indians inspired in him sympathy and respect? Further, what does history tell us of the attitude of Indians toward him?

Present public perceptions of Kit Carson are in large part shaped by the lingering influence of 19th century dime novels. They portrayed Carson as a hater of Indians who killed them for sport. A quotation from Clegg and Beebe's *The American West* captures the flavor of this genre:

Kit was a notable hater of Indians. Nothing made the day for Carson like killing an Indian or two before breakfast and he did it regularly. (1)

While the facts make clear that the above question is wildly inaccurate, it is safe to say that it summarizes the view of Carson held by many. The historical record reveals a very different Carson.

### CARSON "THE LITTLE CHIEF"

To begin with, Carson understood the Indians as well, if not better, than any of his contemporaries. Living among the "friendlies" and fighting against the "hostiles" over the course of a lifetime taught his absorptive mind a great deal about Indians and Indian thinking. He spoke ten Indian languages (as well as French and Spanish) and was also fluent in sign language. His first marriage was to Waa-nibe, a beautiful Arapaho girl, with whom he had two children. After her death, Carson married a Cheyenne woman named Making-Out-Road. Marriage to two Indian women is hardly the behavior of an Indian-hater.

As an opponent in battle, the Indians had the highest regard for Carson. Indians respected prowess in war, whether displayed by ally or foe. Certainly they respected Carson as a warrior, and came to call him "Little Chief" because of his valor. The Indians widely believed that Carson had "strong medicine," and it is a fact of history that despite his numerous battles with them, he was wounded only once and made many near-miraculous escapes. When editor C.M. Chase interviewed Indians at Taos Pueblo who had known Carson, he found that "Kit was a popular man with the Taos people, and the Indians believed he was a little on the supernatural order." (2) Further, nothing in the historical record concerning Kit's fights with Indians reveals anything to his discredit. This is true of all phases of his life--first as a mountain man, then as a scout and guide, then as an Indian agent, and finally as an army officer. (3)

### CARSON AS A MOUNTAIN MAN

As a mountain man, Carson and his fellow trappers followed the Indian code which dictated retribution for attacks by one's enemies. If Indians attacked the trappers, the trappers understood that failure to seek retribution would be taken by the Indians as a sign of weakness, and would invite further, more deadly attacks. Thus, as a mountain man, Carson did kill Indians, but only when the Indians attacked or stole from him or his friends. Carson fought only as preventative retribution--not

out of a love for killing red skins. As Carter and Guild say of Carson,

His attitude toward Indians was typical of that of most of the mountain men and typical of that of the Indians toward each other. He resented their stealing of horses and furs and trade goods, and he was quick to retaliate by fighting to recover stolen property, just as they were themselves. But he never retaliated knowingly against the wrong party, as they often did. With peaceable Indians he associated on friendly terms, and his memoirs contain no expression of prejudice against Indians as a race. (4)

### CARSON AS SCOUT AND GUIDE

As a scout and guide, Carson followed much the same code as he did during his days as a mountain man. Fremont's men fought Indians only when attacked, or to avenge wrongs done to others. The one possible exception to Kit's otherwise spotless record occurred during his service with Fremont. In 1846, a group of California settlers and other volunteers, including Carson, launched a preventative strike against a large war party of Klamath Indians. It has been said that this attack was unjustified (5), but Carson and the settlers were convinced that the Klamaths were preparing to strike the nearby ranches. Significantly, when the attacking force reached the Indian camp, "they found four or five thousand Indians engaged in a war dance." (6) Carson's conscience, at least, was clear concerning this fight of which he said, "Had accomplished what we went for and given the Indians such a chastisement that (it) would be long before they ever again would feel like attacking the settlements." (7)

### CARSON AS INDIAN AGENT

As an Indian agent for the tribes of southern Colorado and northern New Mexico, Carson's record is exemplary. Marshall D. Moody, in an article about Kit as an agent concludes:

If one looks objectively, then, at Carson as Indian agent the conclusion must be reached that he was a man eminently well qualified, who served most of three terms efficiently, with humanity and consideration; that, while he made errors, he did the best he could to further the interests of the government which he represented and, at the same time, to secure the maximum of care and justice for the Indians of his agency. The impression which Carson left on the Indians of New Mexico had lasting and beneficial results for both the Indians and the United States.

For this accomplishment he must be considered as one of the great Indian agents. (8)

The Indians whom Kit served clearly loved him, calling him "Father Kit." Whenever they came to Taos, they made it a point to visit him--either to pass the time in congenial conversation and a pleasant smoke, or to confer with him about problems they were having. He often stood up for them against the government, and traveled to Washington to represent their interests. Again and again, Carson lectured his superiors on the importance of keeping their agreements with the Indians. He well understood that dishonorable politicians and dishonest government agents were often the cause of trouble in Indian country. To quote Kit himself,

Indian agents, appointed solely by political influence, are often swayed by feelings of personal gain in the transaction of their business, making the government appear to act in bad faith towards the savages; then making promises, impossible to fulfill, to shield themselves from attack, they excite feelings of hostility that can only be quenched in blood. To this cause, and that of repeated acts of aggression on the part of the numerous reckless frontiersmen that swarm upon the borders of the Indian territory, may be attributed many, if not most, of our recent Indian war, massacres, and murders, extending from Minnesota to California. (9)

### CARSON, AS FIELD COMMANDER

Finally, during his fourth career as an army officer, Kit did kill Indians in formal campaigns. Such killings, however, were an inevitable part of war, war which in Carson's view the Indians brought down upon themselves by raiding and depredation. Concerning Carson's military campaigns--first against the Jicarilla and Mescalero Apaches, then the Navajo, and finally the tribes of the southern plains, the important question is: Did Carson conduct his conflicts with the Indians fairly, according to what we might loosely call the principles of "just warfare," or is he guilty, like John Chivington in the Sand Creek massacre, of unjustifiable, cold-blooded murder? On this question, the historical record favors Kit, as do these words from him when he heard of Chivington's treachery:

To think of that dog Chivington, and his hounds, up thar at Sand Creek! Whoever heerd of sich doings among Christians! The pore Injuns had our flag flyin' over 'em, that same old stars and strips that we all love and

honor, and they'd bin told down to Denver, that so long as they kept that flyin' they'd be safe. Well, then here come along that durned Chivington and his cusses. They'd bin out huntin' hostile Injuns, and couldn't find none no whar, and if they had, they'd run from them, you bet! So they just pitched into these friendlies, and massa-creed them--yes, sir, literally massa-creed them in cold blood, in spite of our flag thar--women and little children even...And ye call these civilized men Christians; and the Injuns savages, du ye?

I tell ye what; I don't like a hostile Red Skin any better than you du. And when they are hostile, I've fit 'em--fout 'em as hard as any man. But I never yit drew a bead on a squaw or papoose, and I loathe and hate the man who would. Taint nateral for brave men to kill women and little children, and no one but a coward or a dog would do it. (10)

In his military campaigns, Carson did fight and kill Indians, but the fights were fair and nowhere can it be shown that Carson targeted non-combatants or did anything else contrary to now generally accepted principles of "just warfare." Despite the historical facts, many today condemn Carson for his best known campaigns, those against the Apache and Navajo. Because this criticism is so pervasive and widespread, let us examine Carson's role in these famous wars.

Carson's first strife with the Apaches came in the mid-1850s when he was Indian agent for the Jicarillas. Soon after he became agent, the Jicarillas began attacking the ranches of settlers. Kit guided the federal troops sent against the hostile Indians. While several hot battles followed, there is not much controversial about them. They were open war between the warriors of the Jicarilla and the troops of the federal government. The troops won the conflict, and the Jicarillas sued for peace.

So far as future events are concerned, perhaps the most important outcome of the Jicarilla campaign was its solidification of the friendship and respect between Carson and Major James H. Carleton, the commander of the troops sent against the Jicarillas. During this campaign, there occurred the well-known incident which resulted in the major presenting Carson with a custom made hat. Carson and Carleton were trailing a band of hostile Jicarillas, and had been in pursuit for five days. The morning of the sixth day, after carefully reading the Apaches' tracks, Kit told the Major that they would overtake the fleeing band at 2 o'clock that afternoon. Major Carleton promised that if they did so, he would present Kit with "one of the finest hats that could be

produced in New York." Just as Kit predicted, the troops surprised and attacked the fugitive band at precisely 2 o'clock. Making good his word, Carleton later gave Kit a beautiful hat, with an inscription on the band reading "At two o'clock, Kit Carson from Major Carleton." (11) From this time forward, Carleton and Carson became friends and professional allies, a combination that was to have serious consequences for the Navajo.

Eight years later, the U.S. Army appointed Carleton Commander of the Department of New Mexico, with instructions to subdue the Mescalero Apache and the Navajo. Carleton's predecessor, General E.R.S. Canby, had already decided upon a field commander for the operation--Colonel Kit Carson. The choice, of course, pleased Carleton who immediately laid plans with Kit to strike first at the Mescalero.

Carson and his troops, in a campaign lasting less than a month, quickly brought about the Apache surrender. About 400 of the defeated Mescalero were transported to the reservation at the Bosque Redondo, effectively ending their menace to New Mexican settlers. Not much can be said of Carson's role in the Mescalero war simply because it was of so short a duration. By the time Kit entered the fray, the Apaches were nearly destitute, and it took only minor fights with Carson's troops to convince the Mescalero to capitulate. Certainly nothing in this campaign occurred that was in any way a discredit to Carson.

With the Mescalero subdued, Carleton and Carson turned their attention to the Navajo. They opened the military campaign in August of 1863, carrying out several scouts during the summer and fall. The most significant thing about these scouts is that they rarely encountered, much less killed, many Indians. At the approach of the dragoons, the Navajo simply melted away. Unable to fight the enemy, Carson's troops concentrated on destroying the Navajo grain fields. During one scout alone, Carson destroyed over 2 million pounds of grain. By winter, when his troops were able to penetrate Canyon de Chelly, the Navajo were starving and destitute. As he took prisoners, Carson clothed and fed them, then returned them to their band to explain that the consequence of surrender was not annihilation, as many Navajo feared, but rather removal to the reservation at the Bosque Redondo. Faced with starvation, and aware that they were no longer safe in their canyon strongholds, the Navajo began surrendering in massive numbers. The war with the Navajo was over, and they began the "long walk" to the Bosque Redondo.

Regarding the Navajo campaign, several points need to be made. First of all, the idea of removing the Apaches and Navajo to a reservation was the idea of General Canby, not Carleton or Carson. Both of them, however, agreed with this basic concept, and were therefore ideal successors to Canby. As early as 1857, Carson filed a report in which he said, "that the proper way to ensure peace between the Indians and the whites was to separate the various tribes from one another and then remove them all as far as possible from the white settlements." (12) From this position Carson never deviated. Carleton, of course, agreed entirely, making clear to the Navajo from the outset that all who did not surrender and accept confinement at the Bosque would be considered at war with the U.S. Government.

Second, the actual number of Navajo killed by Carson's troops in military action was extremely small. The highest death toll occurred during the long walk, for which Carson was in no way responsible. Carson's campaign succeeded because he destroyed the Navajo supplies (an accepted tactic in "just war"), not because he killed them in battle.

Third, while it is true that a very few women and children did die in the military campaign, these were accidental consequences of war, not the result of military policy or Carson's actions. The rules of "just warfare" make plain that one cannot target non-combatants, but some of their deaths are inevitable, especially in a situation like the Navajo campaign when the warriors are admixed with women and children.

Fourth, both Carleton and Carson well understood that as long as the Navajo felt themselves safe in their canyon strongholds, they would never keep the peace. While they might sign treaties, they kept them at their convenience, breaking them as need or opportunity arose, with little fear of any consequences. Kit's penetration of Canyon de Chelly made clear to the Navajos that they could no longer hide from government troops--that breaches of the peace would lead to military reprisal.

Fifth, it was Kit's essential kindness and fair play towards captives, as well as his personal assurances of safety once they had surrendered, that led to large-scale capitulation on the part of the Navajo. As Professor Lawrence Kelly observes in his *Navajo Roundup*, "Carson's treatment of those Navajos who surrendered was more than generous, and there is no doubt that his kindly method of dealing with the captives was an important factor in the subsequent wholesale surrenders." (13) The important point here is that it took someone of Kit's military ability to convince the Indians that hostility on their part would lead to serious consequences, and it took someone as much respected by the Indians as was Kit to convince them that surrender would lead only to removal to the reservation rather than

annihilation, as many of them feared (and for which many New Mexico citizens clamored). The Canby-Carleton-Carson reservation approach can thus be seen as a rather liberal solution calling for relocation rather than eradication. It can be argued that its well-springs were compassion rather than bloodlust.

Sixth, Carson did not want to fight the Navajo war. As he explained to General Carleton, he had enlisted in the army to fight the Confederates, not to fight Indians. By the time of the Navajo campaign, Carson had six young children from whom he had endured long periods of separation. He wanted to spend his time in Taos with his family. It was only because of his friendship with and respect for Carleton that Carson heeded the call of duty and undertook the Navajo war. It is certain he did not take up the fight out of bloodlust, or out of hatred for the Indians.

Seventh, the Navajo started the war that Carson finished, breaking the peace treaty they had made with Canby and launching devastating raids that took many lives, impoverished entire communities, and led to the abandonment of scores of ranches. The government had no choice but to take military action, action which the Navajo called down upon themselves. While today they portray themselves as the innocent victims of the bloodthirsty Kit Carson, the facts of history make clear that the Navajo were, indeed, quite guilty, and that Carson did his duty as an officer with honor and with as much compassion as the situation would allow.

Finally, Carson *did not cut down the Navajo peach trees*. Troops under the command of Capt. John Thompson cut down nearly 5,000 trees in the summer of 1864, months after Carson had been relieved as field commander. (14)

#### FOOTNOTES

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2. Chase, C.M., The Editor's Run In New Mexico and Colorado. Ft. Davis, Texas, Frontier Book Company, 1968, p. 72. I am indebted to Dr. Marc Simmons for this citation.
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4. *Ibid.*, p. 286.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 152.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 102.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 101

8. Moody, Marshall D., Kit Carson, Agent to the Indians in New Mexico 1853-1861. New Mexico Historical Review 28, 1953, p. 20.

9. Quoted in Estergreen, Morgan M., Kit Carson: A Portrait in Courage. Norman and London, University of Oklahoma Press, 1989, p. 266.

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11. Estergreen, p. 215.

12. Kelly, Lawrence C., Navajo Roundup: Selected Correspondence of Kit Carson's Expedition Against The Navajo, 1863-1865. Boulder, The Pruett Publishing Company, 1970, p. 7.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 97.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 99. See also Pimm, John M., The Fearing Time: 1861-1868. Unpublished Manuscript, Archives of the Kit Carson Historic Museums, pp. 20-21.

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R.C. Gordon-McCutchan, Ph.D. is director of Kit Carson Historic Museums.



#### BOOK REVIEWS

**Nuestras Mujeres, Hispanas of New Mexico, their images and their lives, 1582 to 1992**

**Edited by Tey Diana Rebolledo and Erlinda Gonzales-Berry**

**Price: \$20.00**

**Binding: Paperback**

**El Norte/Academia Press**

*Nuestras Mujeres, Hispanas of New Mexico, their images and their lives, 1582 to 1992*, a recently published work about Hispanic New Mexican women is quite frankly, long overdue. To read most historical accounts of New Mexico the Spanish colonial, Mexican and 19th century eras, some could possibly misinterpret that Hispanic women had little to do with the events of these times. As one reads this volume, one becomes aware that Hispanic women were everything but demure homemakers whose existence revolved around their men and families.

This is a narrative and collection of profiles about outstanding Hispanas, meticulously researched and compiled by contemporary Hispanas.

Its historical importance will become more evident as it could serve as the springboard or inspiration for further studies about the role of women collectively and as individuals in the New Mexico historical experience. (Continued on page 11)



## EL SANTUARIO DE CHIMAYO: A PERSONAL MEMORY

By Sadie Ortiz Knight

When I was a little girl, I spent two weeks or more of each summer at my grandparents' home in Chimayo. I remember going to Mass on Sunday with my grandmother. We would walk up a short hill to the small chapel, Nuestra Senora del Carmen at La Cuchilla, the name of the locality where it was situated. Mass was held only once a month by the priests of the Holy Family from Santa Cruz. My grandmother always carried a small rug on which to kneel or sit because there were no

pews in the chapel. The priest would travel in a buggy pulled by a pair of horses. My grandfather fed and watered the horses, my grandmother prepared a feast and the priest dined at their home.

I used to help set the table with a fine linen cloth and grandma's best china. I felt so important and elegant!

For a long time, I thought that because of my grandparents' hospitality to the priests, they had been granted a burial spot inside the Santuario walls. In later years, before the last of my

aunts died, she told me that my grandparents had been the godparents of Manuel Chavez, a member of the Chavez family who owned the Santuario property, and he had promised them a burial plot on the grounds. They are buried immediately to the left as one goes through the archway at the front entrance of the church yard. Their names are Jacinto and Benita Ortiz, my father's parents.

I feel it is a very special honor to visit their grave sites at this widely renowned shrine.



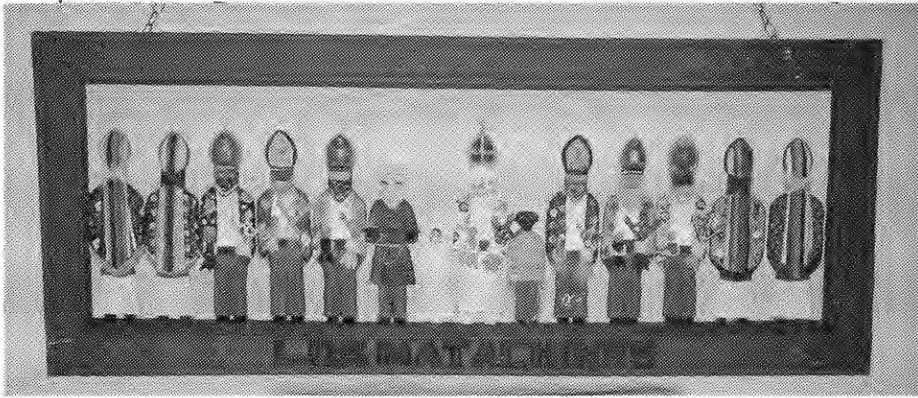


Photo of framed artwork by Santa Fe artist Monica Sosaya Halford.

Detailed close-up of figures on framed artwork by Monica Sosaya Halford of Santa Fe.

## MOROS Y CRISTIANOS: New Mexico Folk Plays

By Guadalupe Tafoya

Webster's Dictionary defines a colony as "A Body of People living in a new territory but retaining ties with the Parent state." Spain colonized most of the western hemisphere and the northern limits of its colonization extended across the North American continent. In the context of the Northern Frontier of New Spain, colonization may be defined as the process of expansion of the Spanish Frontier into areas inhabited by other cultures. The Spanish colony met all the usual characteristics of a colony. There was cultural difference between the colony and the local population. The colonies' culture was a distilled version of the home culture. The colony had its methods by which it maintained itself in the new area which consisted of military, religious, economic and political practices which were also used to influence local cultures, and as time passed, the colony became more like its home culture. Because of separation and the influence of the local population, it always retained characteristics peculiar to that area.

New Mexico experienced two distinct periods of Spanish colonization. The first began in 1598 when the colony was established. It lasted until 1680, when it ended with the Pueblo Revolt. The second period began with the return of the Spanish to New Mexico in 1692 and continued until Mexico gained independence from Spain in 1821.

The two colonial periods in New Mexico were very different as a result of changing policies within the government of the empire. During the first period of colonization in 1598, Juan Perez de Onate led a large wagon train northward. He settled at the Pueblo of San Juan, just beyond the confluence of the Rio Chama and the Rio Grande. On April 20th, the general took formal possession of New Mexico and all the adjoining provinces in a long and wordy act celebrated with Mass and other ceremonial rituals.

Finally, in the evening, there was a performance of an original comedy written by Capitan Farfan on the conquest of New Mexico. Thus, the establishment of the



first province of the Southwest began with a folk play performed in the open air and is a tradition that has persisted to the present day. This representational folk drama tradition was so well established that by the end of the 16th century, even the soldiers were writing and presenting their own plays. The continuity of folk theatre has been kept up by Hispanos throughout the New World.

However, the roots of this tradition date to the medieval times in Spain when the first autosacramentales, as the religious dramas were called, were performed in and outside the churches of Europe.

These liturgical dramas were used by the missionaries to convert the Indians in Mexico to Christianity. Large numbers of these religious plays were produced in New Spain and the name "auto" was preserved in most of the plays. The word "sacramental" was dropped in favor of titles like *El Auto de Cain y Abel* or *El Auto de Adan y Eva*, which was first presented in Mexico City in 1531 by Toribio Motolina.

Many Indian tribes were accustomed to the pageantry of their own festivals, so the religious significance of the Christian plays appealed to the missionaries as a practical teaching tool.

Spanish folk, especially of the Southwest, adopted the simple folk dramas. The folk dramas gave the settlers an opportunity for religious participation in an area that was not well supplied with churches and priests. This rich heritage also filled the need for entertainment. Folk plays became part of the traditional repertoire of the Hispanic population, even in the remote mountain villages.

The most popular plays were ecclesiastical dramas from the Old and New Testaments. In fact, theater in France, England and Spain was so similar that often, you could find episodes that were identical, if not at least similar. A good example is Los Pastores, a Christmas play very popular in the Southwest, which is comparable to Wakefield's English, The Shepherds. There's Mack and Jill, the archangel Michael, the devil, and the hermit, the same characters that can be found in each drama. The theme is the journey to Bethlehem, and all the adventures of fighting good and evil en route. Historians of Spanish drama consider El Auto de Los Reyes Magos or The Three Wise Men the beginning of Spanish national drama, which was probably written in the 12th century.

Possibly the most well-known and popular presentation today is Las Posadas, which is presented during Christmas, as it deals with looking for shelter for Mary and Joseph for the upcoming birth of Christ. Originally, Las Posadas was presented on nine evenings as a novena culminating on Christmas Eve. Gradually, the custom was modified and the play was presented on any evening before Christmas. Once again, today, some communities like the San

Francisco de Asis Parish in Ranchos de Taos are presenting Posadas on the nine evenings with music and refreshments.

An exception to the typical religious dramas is a play that was written in northern New Mexico titled Los Comanches, which can be classified as a dance drama. It first appeared around the turn of the century and is not to be confused with the historical play of the same name. All the members of the cast, except those representing the Holy Family, are dressed in full Indian costumes. The participants communicate through song and dance. It is from this play that Los Comanches dance on January 1st in front of churches and around designated homes, usually of people named Manueles or other favorite or important members of the community. In the historical play, the plot of Los Comanches is simple. Indians take two hostages, referred to as Las Pccas. The Spanish set up camp. The play is presented in the open air and on horseback. The play was written by someone well informed on the history of Spanish military activities in the Southwest who knew Indian tribes and the men who commanded the garrison in Santa Fe. This play is not as popular as the dance drama Los Comanches.

Besides Los Comanches, the other dance drama presented in Mexico and the Southwest on a regular basis is Los Matachines.

It is remarkable how an area so isolated from the rest of the Spanish empire could preserve cultural contacts that maintained many traditions from the peninsula by way of Mexico.

Originally, The Matachines was a sword battle dance performed by Moors and Christians. Los Matachines has been classified as a fifteenth-sixteenth century dance drama performed in North America from the days of the conquest. It is claimed that it was known in England in the Middle Ages as The Morris Dance and in Spain as the Danza de Espada or Moros

y Cristianos. The Matachines dance is a ritual drama performed by a variety of Indian and Hispanic communities. There are two major views of the term "matachin." One view claims that it is Arabic in origin and comes from the word "Mutwajjahin," which means "being masked." The second view is that it is Italian and comes from the word "matto" meaning "madman or fool." In any case, the dance was brought to New Spain as part of a rich heritage of Iberian music, dance drama and poetry. Many of these elements grew into new forms in central Mexico and elsewhere along the Spanish frontier, adapting and transforming into the Mestizo culture of conquest.

Matachines was further dramatized in Mexico by the addition of characters like el Monarca representing Montzuma, and allegoric figures like El Abuelo, El Torito, and la Malinche, all representative forces of evil against virtue as in so many other religious folk plays.

La Malinche, also known as Dona Marina in history, is the young bride whose purity is indicated by the white veil. The horned torito represents lust and tries to despoil her, but the abuelos or grandfathers hold him back with a whip. The common dance elements include crossovers and exchanges between two lines of masked dancers or matachines who carry rattles (guajes) and three-pronged fans (palmas) and wear high caps (cupiles) decorated with ribbons and medals. This dance is sometimes confused with los Moros y Cristianos, a religious drama about the expulsion of the Moors from Spain which usually involves a written script and is still performed in parts of Mexico and the Southwest, especially in the villages of Alcalde and Chimayo.

Today, the dances are still performed throughout the state of New Mexico, in Alcalde,

Bernalillo, Jemez, Taos Pueblo, El Rancho, Chimayo and Santa Fe, to name a few places. It is also performed in Arizona and

through various states in Mexico, including Juarez. In New Mexico, the presentation is more peninsular in that the costuming is very elaborate and the dance steps are deliberate and performed to the special music of violin (fiddle) and guitar and drums used by the Native American groups. Perhaps because this dance drama incorporates all elements from Europe and the Americas it is the most classic example of "El Meztisaje" and is the most representative of the new culture that emerged in the Americas.

Moros y Cristianos is a dance drama that is very popular and widespread in Spain today, and in fact is considered a major tourist attraction.

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*Guadalupe Tafoya resides in Ranchos de Taos and is the curator at Millicent Rogers Museum in Taos.*



## BOOK REVIEWS

(Continued from page 7)

In reading the first chapters about early times, it becomes obvious that all noteworthy men had in their sphere of influence an extraordinary woman, most often she being his wife. As they do now, women touched and influenced the lives of all those around them.

Divided into six sections, the first four are of most interest to historians studying the times prior to this century. Interestingly, one notices the connection of contemporaries profiled with their feminine antecedents.

Richly illustrated with photographs wherever possible of the women profiled, this is perhaps the most comprehensive collection of time periods images spanning centuries. From politicians to teachers, ranchers, healers, and professionals from all walks of life, this book quite well illustrates the diversity of New Mexican Hispanas.

Of interest to Taosenos and students of local history are the eight profiles of local Taosenas. Among them are Refugio Gurriola, whose story crosses multi-cultural boundaries, who was a captive of tribal groups starting in Mexico, and after being ransomed by Taos individuals, becoming a wife and member to this community. Also are writer Cleofas Jaramillo; musician Julia Jaramillo; teacher Josephine Cordova; artist and *enjaradora* Anita Rodriguez; rancher and teacher Alicia Quintana; educator Leonila Duran Serna; sobadora Margaret Mascarenas; and artist Pola Lopez-Jaramillo.

Also featured is a photograph of Taos area midwives who were later identified as Gregorita Salazar Torres, Apolonia Romo, Guadalupe Medina Tafoya, Cleofas Romo Maestas, and Cirilia Medina Tafoya.

El Prado resident, teacher and freelance writer Kathryn Cordova wrote five of the eight Taosena profiles. Edited by Tey Diana Rebolledo, she is quoted, "This book has tried to present women in New Mexico through struggle, hardship, and joy; through marriage, birth and death; through sickness and healing; through tears and laughter. We have tried to present the many faces of Hispanas in New Mexico in all their complexity." After reading this new work, it is obvious the contributors have succeeded in their intended purpose.

Others contributing to the volume include Erlinda Gonzales-Berry, Millie Santillanes, Miguel Gandert, Linda Montoya, Cynthia Gomez, Tey Mariana Nunn, Margo Chavez, Gloria Gonzales, Irene Oliver-Lewis, Laura Gutierrez Spencer, and Maria Dolores Velazquez.

Published by El Norte/Academia Publications, the book consists of 154 pages with 105 photographs and sells for \$20.00

Among the sponsors is The Hispanic Women's Council and a grant from The New Mexico Quincenary Commission.

This volume is highly recommended not only for historians, or students of history, but all who wish to better understand an often ignored facet of our present and past.

-Jerry Padilla

### **Spiders and Spinsters: Women and Mythology**

by Martha Weigle

Publication date: Reprint March 30, 1992

Price: \$17.95

Binding: Paper

University of New Mexico Press

Published anthropological studies have a tendency to be by men about men. Here is a study of women by a woman. *Spiders and Spinsters* is a wide ranging source book about women as they are depicted in the mythologies of the Native American and the classical Judeo-Christian tradition. It is a fascinating collection of women by women; their myths and their realities. Spinning and weaving provide the theme and set the style for this source book. The subject matter is divided into the various stages of a woman's life and includes Myth and Ritual, Myth and Mystery, Myth and Symbols, and more.

Not unexpected is the exposure of the way men have portrayed women mythologically

Martha Weigle is a professor of Anthropology, English and American Studies at the University of New Mexico. This is a reprint of a 1976 volume.

Great book for browsing and well illustrated.

- Fayne Lutz

**Taos: A Memory**  
by **Miriam Hapgood DeWitt**  
Introduction by **Lois Palken Rudnick**  
Afterword by **Edward Bright**  
Publication date: **December 10, 1992**  
Price: **\$16.95**  
Binding: **Cloth**  
University of New Mexico Press

Miriam Hapgood was the youngest daughter of Hutchins Hapgood and Neith Boyce Hapgood, prominent writers of the period, who knew the literary world and were long-time friends of Mabel Dodge Luhan. They corresponded regularly, and after learning of Miriam's bout with depression, Mabel invited her to be her house guest in Taos. She arrived the summer of 1929 and was enchanted with Taos. At 23, Miriam made her first trip west of New York, but she had traveled in Europe with her parents and had gone to school for a time in Switzerland. She not only became the youngest member of Mabel's circle, but her devoted friend and companion. So began her thirteen-year stay in Taos. Her father bought her a small house, she painted, wrote, married, and had children.

This elegantly designed little book of 127 pages with handsome dust jacket is a beautifully written account of her living and learning, her friends and her great friendship with Mabel, trials and tribulations, and life in Taos from 1929 to 1942, when she left because of a failed marriage. It is an addition to the Taos story and shows Mabel in the role of a caring friend and guardian. Miriam was devoted to her, knew her faults, but never had a falling-out with her.

The book also benefits with the introduction by Rudnick who interviewed Miriam and wrote of her stay with Mabel in *Mabel Dodge Luhan: New Woman, New Worlds*, and "The Afterword" by Edward Bright, Miriam's eldest son. He says, "I think Taos Valley awakened in my mother a great sympathy for nature and a full responsiveness to the many things in nature. She took this sympathy away with her. I believe it is what accounts for her persistence; her efforts over a lifetime both to represent in her painting and to protect by reasoned political process the source that nourishes both the human body and the human spirit."

He also reveals that his mother took notes to the hospital for further pages that she intended to add to her memoir, but she died suddenly in April, 1990 at age eighty-four.

-Mildred Bruder Buchanan

**Rocky Mountain West: Colorado, Wyoming and Montana, 1859-1915**  
by **Duane Smith**  
Published **May 14, 1992**  
Price: **\$32.50 (cloth), \$16.95 (paper)**  
University of New Mexico Press

Readers looking for an introductory overview of the settlement and early politics of the Rocky Mountain West will appreciate this narrative by Professor Duane A. Smith of Fort Lewis College.

Beginning his story with the Pike's Peak Gold Rush of 1859, Smith gives us insight into the rapid development of urban centers, railroads, industry and tourism in this region over a fifty-eight year period. Some of the interesting subjects introduced include: federal land and Indian policies, inter-city rivalries, labor exploitation and the rise of unions, competition for development capital, effects of the 1890's depressions, early conservation and environmental issues.

In an "Essay on Bibliography," the author gives us ideas for further exploration of these and other issues.

Some previously unpublished photos bring scenes to life. As a geography fanatic, I missed maps showing the locations mentioned that might be hard to find on a current highway map.

-Andy Lindquist

**Old Oraibi: A Study of the Hopi Indians of Third Mesa**  
by **Mischa Titiev**  
Published **1992**  
Binding: **Paper**  
University of New Mexico Press

*Old Oraibi* is a study by an anthropologist who lived with the Old Oraibi Hopi Indians in the 1930's and in 1940. The study was originally published by the Harvard University Press in 1944.

*Old Oraibi* describes the social organization, the mores, and the ceremonies of the Third Mesa Hopi Indians. Feminists will find much of which to approve in the Old Oraibi culture. Lineage follows the mother's line and the husband traditionally would go to live with his wife at her family's place of residence. The house belongs to the wife, as do the crops after they have been brought in by the husband. Puritans will find much of which to disapprove in the Old Oraibi. Sexual mores are lax, and especially so for adolescents. Divorce is frequent and easy.

The key to understanding Hopi culture, according to Titiev, is an understanding of their ceremonies, such as the Katsina (sic) and the snake dance. Lack of rain, failure of crops, disease, or enemy attacks could threaten the unwarlike Hopi agricultural society living in a semi-desert area. The ceremonies are an attempt to utilize supernatural means to provide the Hopis with rain, crops, health and safety.

It is unclear to this reader whether Titiev is describing practices he observed, or whether he is describing the practices of an earlier period. In 1906, the more conservative Hopis moved out of Old Oraibi and established another settlement on the Third Mesa at Hotevilla. The ceremonial pattern then declined among the more progressive Hopi who remained at Old Oraibi. These were the people who wished to accommodate to the American culture as they perceived it.

*Old Oraibi* is an ethnographic classic. It can be read with profit and pleasure by an anthropologist, or by the general reader who is interested in the Hopi way of life.

-Leonard A. Lecht

# EXCERPT: TALES OF THE MAIDU

## From a book in progress

By John Duncan

cass. 13A Tom Epperson *Origin of Tobacco*

They was tryin to get the spirits to come. And they sing at night, and sing all night, and no spirits come. So the one man in the bunch told these fellas, "You fellows are dumb," he said. "You can't make spirit come without any smoke and without any smell." So they send this pole el kutim (night hawk) back, and I don't know where--east somewhere, wherever the sun comes up. So polelcutim went back there and got the seeds. And he gave the seeds to the people here. They burnt off the brush and plant those seeds. Lay the seed on their knees (didn't have no pants those days) and snapped em off, knock em off. Another one knock em off. All around that burnt place. That's the way they plant those seeds. Then pretty soon, the goddamn tobacco comin up. And by golly then they had a smoke. Then when they gather up in a bunch in the sweat houses there, when they gonna sing, why, make the smoke. Everybody smoke with them rock pipe. Only had rock pipe those days. All the men that was in the sweat house would smoke, pass this pipe around. And then one man sets down there and starts singin. By God, pretty soon the spirits from heaven, wherever they are, they smell the smoke, listen to this song, listen to this rattles--pretty soon the spirits come. And by golly, keep on, keep on--and the spirit got bigger and bigger, then pretty soon a different one--then pretty soon this man that come to be power man. He has the power, he can sing, make those gakini come. So that's how they started. But he couldn't start it without his tobacco. That's how they git the tobacco and the spirits, and then pretty soon a lot of em got to learn--the spirits told em where to go to get the power. Like Homer Lake, and Soda Lake, and all those places where this is

power, why they go there and get the power. They'll be singin man. They turn out to be doctors. That's how Indian doctors started: That's what they tell me in Indian stories, early days. And this feller, over in Quincy, he plant his tobacco, he got the seeds somewhere. Planted tobacco just like that.

Burn it off, put the seed on the knee and knock it off that way and this way--flowers comin up pretty good there, tobacco leaves. Leaves aren't very nice, flatten it out. And they had a big time in Quincy. And one old fella from Big Meadows he come to the big time, and on the way back he walked along the road and he seen this tobacco. And nobody at the camp. He says, "By God, I better have me tobacco," he says--"No tobacco over there." So pick up two three those bush, take em clear back over to Big Meadows.

Took him two days, I guess, to git home. The old guy. And by golly, this nighthawk got after the old man. The old man heard him comin--"koot, koot, koot--POLE KOOT, KUT, KUT, KUT" hear em comin, and goddamn, he just laugh his goddamn feather right off his head with a big shake. Knocked the man down and man's layin there like he was dead. And so I guess everybody gots scared and helped the old man out some way--pretty soon they call the Indian doctors. Same camp I guess, he come on and sing and here comes this polelcutim. Told him he says, "That man steal tobacco without talk to me--steal my tobacco," he said. "I gotta even up on him." (laughter) So this fella pray to him, talk to him--so he got all right. Polelcutim told him, "Don't steal my tobacco next time," he says. "You talk to me first before you steal my tobacco after thees." (laughter) See, this poelcutims the one that went and got the tobacco seed, early days. Then after they got em to grow--then different ones got the seed

out of him. They plant em over here in Quincy. By God this old fella went by he didn't think nothin of it, just pick it up--took two or three and went on. But the polelcutim didn't want that. Got to pay him somethin for that. Talk to him first. So that's the tobacco story.

### BOILIN AND STEAMIN

They dance at night in the sweat house. When I was a kid, I used to be right in it. Sweat runs off of you by God just like you're workin hard out here and run out of that sweat house and big hot fire. Jump right in the goddamn water. Lay there and water be boilin and steamin. I don't know why those old timers never died of pneumonia or somethin. I seen lot of that in my young days.

Editor's Note: This excerpt was written in the vernacular of one of John Duncan's subjects. Duncan strived to maintain authenticity in his study of the Maidu Indians, an extinct tribe in Southern California. John is a former anthropologist who lived with the Maidu in the 1950's and is now an artist in White Oaks, New Mexico. At present, John Duncan is in search of a publisher and has agreed to share some of his findings with the Ayer y Hoy readership.



## *Taos County Historical Society Honors Griffin*

James B. Griffin, the Taos County Historical Society's Honoree of the Year, earned his laurels as the result of careful work and documenting which Griffin refers to as "fun."

The honoree's documentation began when he attempted to learn how to bounce light off the ceiling or walls for indoor photography in 1972. "I don't care how dead the walls or retablos look, you take a picture and the light would bounce right back," Griffin states. Even Eastman Kodak offered no help in the way of books on the subject. With the assistance of his long-time friend Rev. Manuel Alvarez, Griffin used the famous San Francisco de Asis Church in Ranchos de Taos as the setting for his experiments. With "much practice, at least 100 flashbulbs and as many rolls of film," Griffin noted how the process varied, depending on various changes and daylight conditions.

Once Griffin satisfied his curiosity and thirst for knowledge,

"Rev. Alvarez suggested, let's go get some churches." The pair spent much time visiting and photographing New Mexico churches, village missions and even family chapels. Griffin credits his clerical friend with the ability to open doors that might otherwise be closed to him for the photography project. The end result included a slide collection of 330 slides and three complete photo albums of area churches. This project then led to a set of 300 slides of *descansos* (cemeteries), again through the pair's efforts, from Colorado, Arizona, New Mexico and Texas and a complete set of documentation of every mission in the state of Texas.

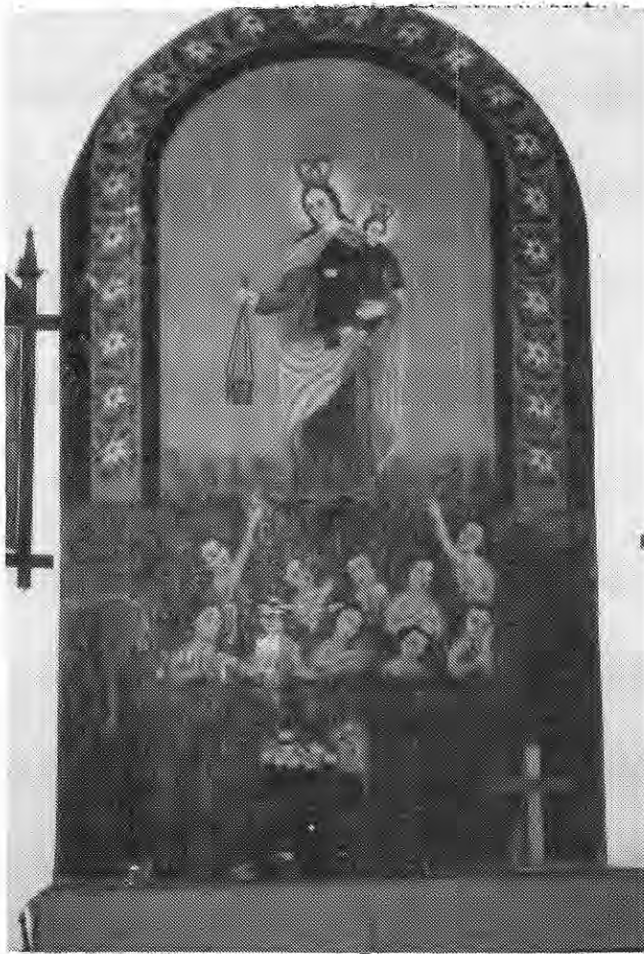
Griffin and Alvarez covered "more dirt roads, quite a few, and more churches and cemeteries than I thought," according to the documentary photographer.

Griffin, a former electrical and civil engineer, was born on July 25, 1916, in Dallas Texas. He received his engineering degree from the University of Austin. James wed the love of his life, Margie, nicknamed "Sparkle

Plenty" by artist R.C. Gorman for her courage to wear turquoise with diamonds.

The couple parented three sons, Allen (Socorro), Rev. Pat (an ordained Episcopalian priest in Denver), and Jack Beall (Garland, Texas). Two grandchildren and a 5 year-old great grandson also added to the Griffin family. After a marriage of slightly over 50 years, Margie passed away on June 19, 1990.

The couple moved from Dallas to Taos "permanently" after many years of extended visits to the area. They purchased La Dona Luz Restaurant, which they owned for nine years. "I'm still a Texan," Griffin states, "but I love this country." Texas' loss is indeed Taos' gain, as the transplanted citizen shares the same birthday with local patron Santiago and continues sharing his documentation efforts with the Taos County Historical Society, the Taos High Cultural Reporter project and any other group or individual with a quest for historical knowledge.



Altar screen, interior, Las Trampas church.



San Francisco de Asís altar, Christmas, 1982.

A brief collection of photos  
by James B. Griffin:

Exterior, San Ysidro chapel,  
Los Cordovas.



Interior, San Juan de los  
Lagos chapel, Talpa.



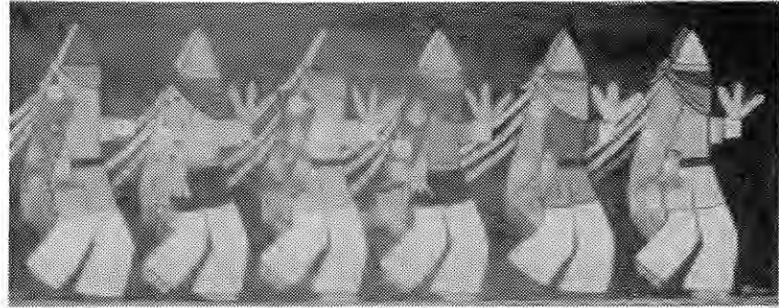


Historic photo, circa 1819.

**Photo Credits:** Cover and page 2, courtesy of Kit Carson Historic Museums.

Matachines photos, courtesy of Arsenio Cordova, Richard Halford and Kit Carson Historic Museums.

Photos of churches, courtesy of James B. Griffin.



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The tentative schedule of **Taos County Historical Society** field trips for the 1993 season:

**June 5:** Taos Drum, a tour of the factory south of Taos.

**July 3:** Picuris Lookout, Serna Grant and sections of the Camino Real. (Bring your own lunch and be prepared for a moderate, short hike).

**August 7:** Old logging operation, log flumes and camps on the Santa Barbara Grant. (Bring your own lunch and be prepared for a moderate hike).

**September 4:** All day trip to Pecos National Historic Park.

**October 2:** All day trip to the Valle Vidal area, Ring Ranch, old Ponil Park and La Belle Townsite. (Bring a lunch and be prepared for outstanding aspen viewing).

**Participants for all field trips will meet at the Taos County Courthouse parking lot at 8:30 a.m. on the appointed date(s). For more information, contact Andy Lindquist at 751-0935.**