

# AYER Y HOY en TAOS

Yesterday and Today in Taos County and  
Northern New Mexico

Summer 1998

\$3.00



Buck Dunton painting at an easel in an *arroyo*. Photograph courtesy of the Kit Carson Historic Museums.

**IN OR OUT OF THE MAINSTREAM? The Lost Artists of Taos, by David L. Witt**  
**OUR TEACHER ALICE HYSON, by J. M. Bernal**  
**THE OLD SPANISH TRAIL AND ITS CLIFTON, ENGLAND, CONNECTION**

**A PUBLICATION OF THE TAOS COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

## CONTENTS

IN OR OUT OF THE MAINSTREAM? .....	Page 3
The Lost Artists of Taos	
by David Witt	
OUR TEACHER ALICE HYSON .....	Page 8
A Brief Story of Alice Hyson, a Teacher at Ranchos de Taos, New Mexico	
by J.M. Bernal	
THE OLD SPANISH TRAIL AND ITS CLIFTON, ENGLAND, CONNECTION .....	Page 11
Reliving the Incredible Journey of American Pioneer William Workman 156 Years Ago	
BOOK REVIEWS .....	Page 14

## AYER Y HOY en TAOS

Yesterday and Today in Taos County  
and Northern New Mexico

Issue No. 25: Summer 1998  
ISSN 1088-5285

The Taos County Historical Society's publication, *AYER Y HOY in 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 publications pertinent to the Taos and 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.

All articles, maps, photographs, drawings, etc., are the property of the contributor and may not be used or reproduced in any way without written permission from the society and/or the contributor.

*AYER Y HOY* is mailed to all members of the Taos County Historical Society as a benefit of membership. Memberships are \$15 for individuals, \$20 for families, and \$30 for sustaining memberships.

### Publications Committee

Fayne Lutz  
Jerry Padilla  
Elizabeth Cunningham  
Robert L. White

### Editor

Melody Romancito  
Copy Editor  
Susan Mihalic

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.

Andy Lindquist, President  
Bob Romero, Vice President  
Corina Santisteven, Secretary  
Lucille Vargas, Treasurer

P.O. Box 2447 • Taos, New Mexico 87571

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

It came to our attention in the last issue of *Ayer y Hoy* that some historical facts in one article were totally wrong. These facts related to the origin of one of our small communities in Taos County, and they were undocumented as to source of information.

Our opinion is that all material printed in *Ayer y Hoy* that is of historical nature should either be documented or labeled as fiction.

– Jenny Vincent

## EDITOR'S COLUMN

This year as we celebrate 100 years of Taos as an art colony, David Witt asks if the Taos Society of Artists helped define American representational art as a relic of nineteenth-century romanticism or if the society was of little consequence in a world shifting toward other expressions of the artistic spirit.

In this issue *Ayer y Hoy* reprints an engaging article about Alice Hyson that first appeared in a church pamphlet printed in 1960 for the dedication of the Hyson home to the Spanish Presbyterian Church in Ranchos de Taos. Many thanks to Corina Santisteven for suggesting the article and to Margaret McTavish and Emma Gomez for helping us find the photograph of Hyson on page 9.

Also included is a reprint of an article first appearing in a British newspaper in 1997, an account of four history-loving persons who decided to retrace the steps of former countrymen William and David Workman on the Old Spanish Trail from Abiquiu to Los Angeles. The Workman brothers once posted a one-penny reward for the return of their young apprentice, Kit Carson, to their saddlery in Franklin, Missouri. Thanks to John Sharpe of Clifton, Cumbria, England, for sending us this charming narrative.

Also, thanks, as always, to Fayne Lutz for her unique perspective, and to Andy Lindquist for his persistence, patience and help. ■



O. E. Berninghaus in his Taos studio, about 1926. Photograph courtesy of Barbara Brenner and the Kit Carson Historic Museums.

## In or Out of the Mainstream?

### THE LOST ARTISTS OF TAOS

by David L. Witt

The Taos art community was established one hundred years ago in 1898. After a slow beginning, the "art colony" was flourishing by the 1920s when its artists briefly garnered much attention on the national scene. While Taos continued to flourish as a favored place for subsequent generations of artists, knowledge of its connection to the larger currents of American art have frequently been overlooked by art historians and critics.

As the first permanent professional artist-resident of Taos, Bert Phillips (1868-1956) early on imagined the existence of an art colony in Taos. Phillips wrote to his co-dis-

coverer of Taos, Ernest Blumenschein (1874-1960), "For heaven sake tell people what we have found! Send some artists out here. There is a lifetime's work for twenty men."

He had used the term "Taos School" by 1900. (White) He and Blumenschein (and, separately, Joseph Henry Sharp), calling upon their time as art students in France, took as their models the Barbizon artists, French landscape painters who earlier in the nineteenth century had painted their pastoral scenes directly from nature and formed themselves into a sort of loose grouping. (Leavitt)

From its beginnings, the Taos art colony looked to the



An unknown man, E. L. Blumenschein, another unknown man and Kibby Couse. This photograph was taken about 1919 in front of Couse's home on Kit Carson Road. Photograph courtesy of the Kit Carson Historic Museums.

outside world for aid in determining its structure. The French influence did not stop with its suggestion of romantic subject matter, but also provided a convenient specter to be fought against.

Domestically, the creation of an authentic American school of art became an important topic at around the same time Phillips moved to Taos. The desire to establish America as a force in world art was an important topic in cultural and soon in political circles. This was partly in reaction to the dominance of European, and particularly, French influence on American art. It also led to what may have been the first active intervention of the federal government in the arts, when the McKinley administration orchestrated the American entry into the International Universal Exposition in Paris in 1900 to feature artists who were primarily associated with this country rather than artists who were expatriates in France. (Fischer) While no more than a minor success in calling attention to a purely American art movement, it did formalize the effort to establish one.

Although they themselves had received much of their art training in France, Phillips, Blumenschein, and many of the other artists who moved to Taos took to heart this

desire to create an American art movement while specifically rejecting European art. Although Blumenschein wrote with some passion about the importance of his time in Paris, he also made clear his disdain for much of what he had done there: "We were ennuied with the hackneyed subject matter of thousands of painters; windmills in a Dutch landscape; Brittany peasants with sabots, French roads lined with Normandy poplars; lady in negligee reclining on sumptuous divan; lady gazing in mirror; lady powdering her nose, etc., etc. We felt the need of a stimulating subject."

The French art colonies known to American students inspired the creation of an art colony not only in Taos but also in other parts of the country during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. From Woodstock, New York, to Carmel, California, rural colonies drew artists away from the art centers of Chicago and New York City—at least for summer visits. Longer sojourns away from the centers were detrimental for careers, as the Taos artists were to learn.

Without showing much influence of the Luminist painters or the Hudson River School, the first twentieth-century Taos painters did seem to be the inheritors of the



Walter Ufer, Bert Phillips, and Joseph Sharp at Taos Pueblo's San Geronimo Feast Day.  
 Photograph courtesy of the Kit Carson Historic Museums.

romantic tradition. Taos provided the artists with the right combination of geographic and cultural landscapes for a wealth of subject matter. They had deep canyons, sagebrush-covered mesas, mountain forests, and alpine peaks for background and Native American, Hispanic, and old-West Anglo cultures for exotic interest, but they faced and ultimately could not surmount two problems. One was that the sense of place in New Mexico was too strong for the New York art critics. The other was that the definition of what defined a national art changed.

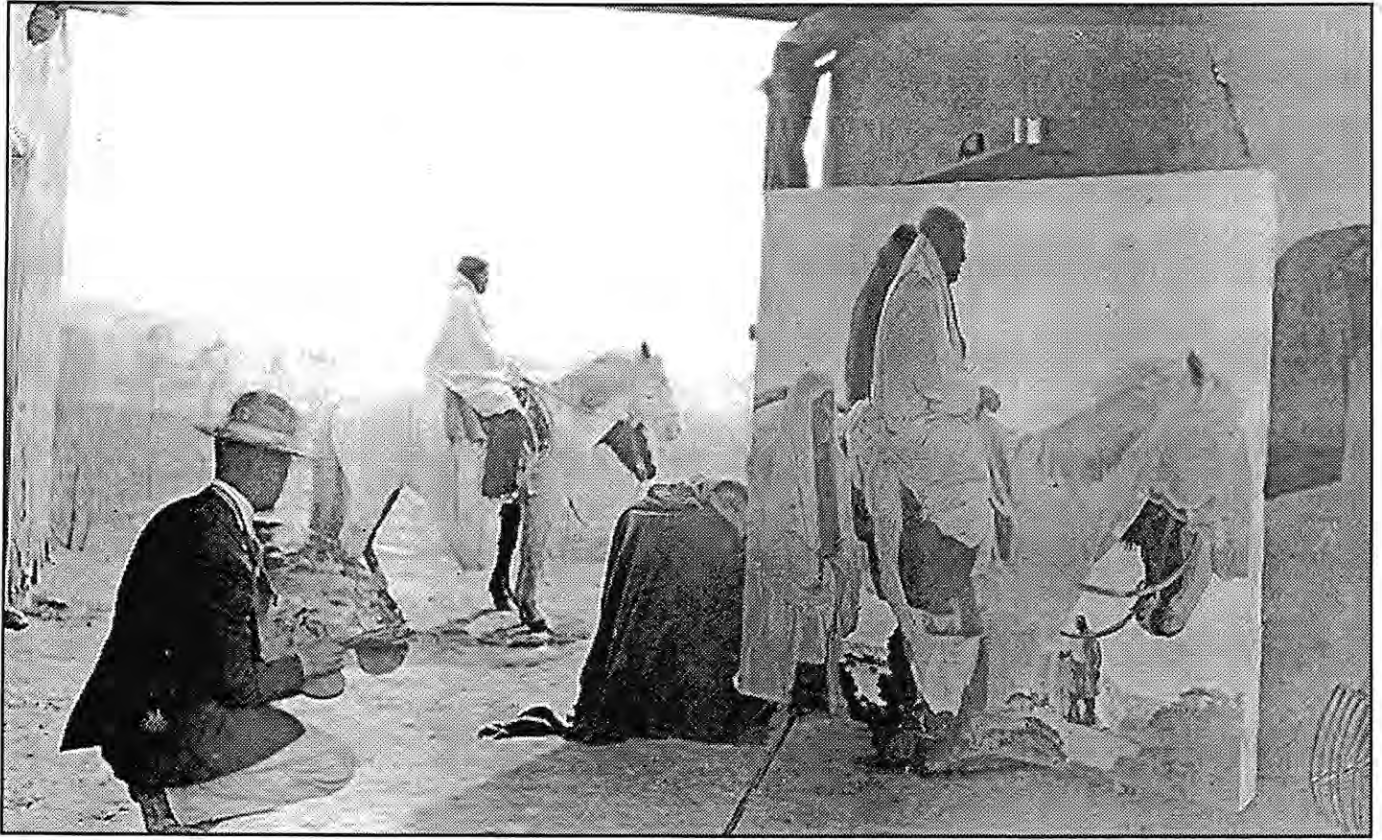
The Taos painters sought to create a new American art through their subjects, who for them represented America—primarily, the native figure in relation to the landscape. Landscape could be urban or industrial, hinterlands or seashore. The people in these scenes could include romanticized workers or observers of scenery. Paintings of the West, especially of Arizona and New Mexico, added to this the exotic—not only in terms of land forms but also in term of cultures.

Their important stylistic development was in the depiction of light. They captured the vivid colors brought about by the harsh, stark light. This stood in contrast to the dreamy Hudson River School, the melodrama of the earlier Western painters such as Moran and Bierstadt, the dark

palette of European academics, and even the watery fuzzi-ness of the Impressionists. The dry climate and the hun-dred-mile vistas forced the Southwest painters to acknowl-edge the primacy of the environment just as they forced the same acknowledgement from native peoples who were the subjects of the painters' work.

If the painters were correct in thinking that this combination of people and climate coalesced into a new school of American art, perhaps *the* school, then clearly they were in the mainstream. For a time in the 1920s, the "Taos men" won a large number of significant prizes in the major art competitions held in New York, Chicago, and other large cities. They had every reason to believe they were helping to define the American mainstream in art. They met every criteria of the time for this.

Art training in Paris had been considered essential for serious American artists in the last quarter of the nine-teenth century and into the early twentieth. Among the early Taos artists who had studied in Paris were Sharp, Phillips, Couse, Blumenschein, Higgins, Critcher, and Adams. Sharp was also in Belgium while Chicago artists Higgins, Hennings, and Ufer studied in Munich. Most of them maintained close ties to the art centers in New York or Chicago. In addition, membership in the prestigious



Walter Ufer painting a Taos Pueblo man on horseback. Photograph courtesy of Kit Carson Historic Museums.

National Academy of Design was achieved by Adams, Berninghaus, Blumenschein, Cook, Couse, Higgins, Kloss, Rolshoven, Sterne, and Ufer. Some of them would have successful teaching careers, including Adams, Benrimo, Bistram, Dasburg, and Lockwood. Taos also drew immigrant artists as residents – Fechin and Gaspard from Russia and Fleck from Austria.

Taos (and its sometimes-rival-sometimes-partner, Santa Fe) was in the mainstream in yet another important way if judged by the visitors it drew. The *literati* visited with great frequency, particularly after the first World War. Beginning with Remington, the stellar list of painters was to include Hartley, Henri, Marin, O’Keeffe, and Sloan; photographers Paul Stand and later Ansel Adams (who dedicated himself to photography following a visit to Taos); and other leading creative talents of the time, from Carl Jung to Martha Graham. Two of the most powerful cultural forces from New York were in evidence. Mabel Dodge Stern (later, Luhan) moved her salon from the East and became such a potent force that Taos was sometimes referred to as “Mabeltown.” The Steiglitz group was represented by O’Keeffe, Hartley, and Marin. The Taos art community drew the best minds from both the East and West coasts. From the late teens into the thirties, the artist population continually grew both in number and in the prestige of its artists.

So what happened?

Taos became known not so much for its modernist visitors and residents as for the Taos Society of Artists. They parlayed their gains in the 1920s into a strategically disastrous direction. The Society itself, the engine that powered them to fame, ended up marginalizing them. While the Taos artists were a continual presence in major national art shows, they were often shown together as a group, separated from other artists. While their intention was to create an American school, they were soon perceived, even when they didn’t show together, as having created a Taos school—a regionalist aberration showcasing a landscape that was not green and people who were not white.

Although all of the Society members, especially Blumenschein and Higgins, created credible and occasionally very fine work, a New York paper warned as early as 1920 that Taos could not become “a great artistic shrine until it has been put on the map by a great artist.” If Taos had too much sense of place, then its lack of a “great” artist proved the root of its second and insurmountable problem.

The purpose of the Taos colony had been to create an art definable as American. Prior to the twentieth century, a national art had been defined by the imagery of a country’s great artists. Up until then, that image had been representational (some people prefer the term *figurative*). Fine art had been about subject matter and judged accordingly.

By the time the Taos artists reached the height of their power in the 1920s, this was no longer the case. What came to define what was important in a national school of art was no longer sense of place but innovation, obsession with the new. Modernism's collection of "isms" was the new standard.

No matter how good the Taos Society of Artists (and their non-Society Taos colleagues), no matter how much they helped define the mainstream of representational art, the new point of reference had shifted elsewhere, leaving the "Taos men" as either relics of nineteenth-century academic-romanticism or talented but irrelevant examples of Americana, beyond folk art but of little consequence in an art world where subject matter was dead.

One is left to wonder how much consciousness the the Taos painters had about this shift, but by 1927, when the Taos Society of Artists disbanded, the artistic center of attention in this country was no longer focused on them. It is interesting that some of the most important American modernists were associated with Taos and New Mexico, but they were (or later would be) perceived as special individuals outside the norm of any school (O'Keeffe) or were associated with somewhere else (Marin, Hartley) while their New Mexico work remained little known. Whether or not an American art had been created by the Taos Society or anyone else, it continued in the shadow of European accomplishments until after the second World War.

The old mainstream was not the new mainstream and because history is written by the victors—in this case, the adherents to modernism—the old mainstream disappeared from the historical horizon almost as thoroughly as if it had never existed. But those early Taos artists had been a real force for a while. They have left their mark on Taos forever. ☒

#### REFERENCES:

Blumenschein, Ernest L. "Origin of the Taos Art Colony." *El Palacio* 20. May 1926:190-192.

Fischer, Diane Pietrucha. "The Spirit of Innes: Creating an American School at the Paris Exposition of 1900." *American Art Review*, June/July 1995, Vol. 7, No. 3:102-109.

Leavitt, Virginia. "Taos and the American Art Colony Movement: The Search for an American School of Art." Paper delivered at the New Mexico Art History Conference, June 1986. From archives of the Southwest Art History Council.

White, Robert R. and Julie Schimmel. *Bert Geer Phillips and the Taos Art Colony*.

---



Alice Hyson

## Our Teacher Alice Hyson

**A BRIEF STORY OF ALICE HYSON,  
A TEACHER AT RANCHOS DE TAOS,  
NEW MEXICO, 1884-1915**

**by J. M. Bernal**

*Reprinted from a pamphlet published by the Board of National Missions of the United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. 1960.*

The year 1884 was to mark the beginning of events which were to have deep significance in the life of Alice Hyson and in the lives of all the people of Ranchos de Taos, young and old, who were affected by her work as a school teacher. For it was at this time that Alice Hyson decided to become a pioneer missionary teacher in New Mexico. What the impelling force that led her to make this decision was, we don't know, but it was not a decision prompted by a sudden impulse for all her work late on revealed devotion, zeal and firm convictions. In 1904 an article written by her, titled "Twenty Years in the Taos Valley," was published in the *Home Missions Monthly Magazine*, a publication of the Women's Board of Home Missions of the Presbyterian Church. The article begins, "In 1884 I left my home in the East to enter the missionary field in New Mexico." She left her home in York County, Pennsylvania, in June, and came by train to Santa Fe, where Miss Allison, a teacher at the Allison-James School, was waiting for her. The trip from Santa Fe to Taos by wagon over mountains and canyons on narrow rough and winding roads must have been challenging. There are two or three versions of the story of that trip.

According to Miss Faith H. Haines, a former Menaul High School teacher, who came to Ranchos to teach with Alice Hyson in 1912-13, Miss Hyson made the trip in a rickety wagon with an Indian driver. Somewhere on the road, he had to mend either the harness or the wagon with baling wire. It must have been an impressive initiation into the real life of the Southwest for a girl from the East.

Her first impression at Ranchos was that of strangeness. How strange! Adobe houses, with flat roofs, mud floors, small windows, low doors and mud fireplaces. They were as strange to her as the people and the surroundings. "How different from everything I had left in Pennsylvania," she thought. She began to face difficulties; Spanish was not only strange but a foreign language. English was a foreign language to the people here, for hardly anyone spoke it.

There were other difficulties to overcome; she did not come into a well organized school system. On the contrary, conditions in New Mexico at the time were very low. The Spanish settlements in the Southwest had been completely isolated for almost three hundred years. The United States Government which had acquired this territory had done very little to help establish schools for these new citizens. However there was some semblance of public schools. In Ranchos, Jose Miguel Vigil had taught school for some time, probably since 1882. The school lasted three months each year. Teaching was in Spanish, according to Dionicio Martinez and Sabino Sanchez. Old methods used in Spain about three hundred years ago were still used here. All the pupils studied aloud, the beginners learning syllables, B-a ba, C-a ca, D-a da.



The schoolroom was located at Doña Antonia Montaño's house, where Mr. Tomas Martinez now lives. Dionicio describes it as an ill ventilated room which faced the river. It was dark, with small windows, mud floor, a low door, and a ceiling of *raja* or split cedar strips and an earthen fireplace.

But such conditions did not dismay Alice Hyson. She was young, about 23, and had the optimism of youth and determination. Her smile, her jovial disposition, her beauty, were qualities that overcame obstacles. She went to teach at Mrs. Montaño's *sala*, and taught there for about two years, according to Dionicio, who was one of her pupils.

"I opened school," she said. The first week some of the boys came out of curiosity to see 'La Americana' who had come to teach. "But that's where they made their mistake, for they soon became prisoners of her charm, a prison which they loved more and more as they stayed in school. To paraphrase, their very books and they became friends. She continues, "In those days, parents did not send girls to attend school as it was for boys. At the same time I established a sewing class from which the girls did not wish to be absent. Then the mothers began to take as much pride in the girls as in the boys."

According to Mrs. Jacobo Mondragon, Alice Hyson lived in part of the house of José Domingo Mondragon for two or more years. This house later belonged to Miss Ursinia Frésquez. The struggle to purchase this house would make an interesting story. It is now the Alice Hyson Memorial.

After two years of teaching in Mrs. Montaño's *sala*, the school was moved to the little church, "a frame building with a conspicuous tower," said Mrs. Weimer. "It was located where the kindergarten now stands. Some of the men had to make more benches, for the school was growing, besides hard benches are more conducive to knowledge."

The school did not stay very long in this little church. Lightning struck and damaged part of the building; however, school remained in the undamaged part. But the school, like a growing boy who all too soon finds himself too big for his breeches, had grown in enrollment as well as in educational and spiritual influence in the community. A new school building was necessary. Alice Hyson began to contact friends to explain the need for a new school and before long she had collected \$1300.00. A new school building was erected, probably about the summer of 1888. It consisted of two classrooms and four rooms for teachers' quarters. Sabino said, "The walls were made by Antonio Martinez with the help of his wife, Desideria, and his two sons, Amado and Luis." "Rev. Curtis, the Presbyterian minister in Taos, directed the construction," said Mrs. Mondragon.

Some playground equipment was installed. Miss Hyson planted fruit and shade trees to teach their value

and beauty. She had deplored the lack of trees not only in Ranchos but in Taos. All the school programs she prepared were designed not only to entertain but to develop the abilities of the children and to teach them to love the school. Elsie and Corine Gusdorf, now Mrs. Weimer and Mrs. Albright respectively, said, "We loved the school and did not want to miss a day. When there was snow on the ground, old Miguel Gonzales, the faithful hired man, used to take Elsie in his arms and me (Corine) piggy back." Yes, the children loved the school, but Alice Hyson loved the children. She said, "The longer I teach the more fascinating the children become to me."

They would write to her when she was away on her vacation, sometimes enclosing little flowers and leaves in their letters. They knew she appreciated these tokens of affection. One child wrote to her once, "My plant is growing and I'm for Jesus." Miss Hyson had given the children potted plants to hold in their hands while they sang "Growing Up for Jesus."

Not only the children, but the adults too loved Alice Hyson. Once in a while she was invited to the wedding dance of some of her former pupils. She would go and was given the seat of honor near the bride and groom.

There were sad days when some of her children passed away. One time when she came from her vacation a boy or girl had died without having medical attention. She said time and again, "If we could just have some nurses' training for our girls, so that they could administer medical aid to the many who are in need."

From meager beginnings in the early days of 1884 when Dionicio Martinez and Jacobo Mondragon, Squire Hartt, and Tonita Gonzales were the only students, the school had grown not only in Ranchos, but its influence was far reaching. Miss Hyson had sent Dionicio Martinez to the newly established Presbyterian Boarding School in Las Vegas, New Mexico. "I guess she found out that I had very little money, for she gave me ten dollars," said Dionicio.

Dionicio Martinez later became one of the best Taos County Treasurers. Jacobo became a school teacher, preacher and Sunday school organizer. Squire Hartt became a successful business man. Others were taking important positions not only in Taos County, but all over the state.

In 1911, the writer of this article was forced by necessity to interrupt his schooling and to teach for a temporary period. He came to teach here at Ranchos. Miss Hyson helped him with suggestions, with ideas, with teaching materials, but best of all with encouragement and inspiration.

We organized a literary society, which met once a week. A variety of programs was presented by the members, but the most popular type was debating. It became so popular that sometimes a debating team from Taos would come to debate with a Ranchos team. Taos teams were usu-



Alice Hyson's Class of 1912-13, Ranchos de Taos. Photograph courtesy of the Spanish Presbyterian Church.

ally headed by J. J. Vigil, Pascual Martinez and Antonio Rivera. Ranchos had champions too: Jacobo Mondragon, Tomas Rivera, Dionicio Martinez, Jacob Bernal and others. The crowds who attended were so large that there wasn't even standing room.

The seed planted in 1884 was bearing fruit in the lives of those who at first came out of curiosity to see "*La Americana*," for now as adults they were taking part in debating and discussing educational subjects and studying means to improve conditions in Taos Valley. Her cup was overflowing.

At the end of my first term of teaching, she asked me to paint the school building. My brother and I started the painting. One day while I was painting a door on the outside, she came and watched for a moment. I thought she was watching me, but she was not. She had noticed that a piece of plaster had broken off the wall. She walked away, but returned soon with dirt in a pan. Then she disappeared again to return with a hoe, a bucket of water and something in a gunny sack. In a few minutes she had the mud partly mixed. Then she took straw out of the sack and mixed it well with the mud. With her bare hands she patched the plaster. Just then Miss Haines, coming out of the building, saw her and exclaimed, "Miss Hyson, why are you doing that?" She laughed and said, "It's fun! Don't you think it looks better now?"

But the years of incessant toil had sapped her strength, and she became ill. She spent two weeks at the home of the Gerson Gusdorfs in Taos, resting and being attended by the

doctor. But she had to go home where she could receive medical care in some hospital. She came back to Ranchos to pack her personal belongings and to say goodbye to her beloved people. One cold morning in February of 1915 many of her friends had gathered by the yard just outside her room, for their were too many to stay inside. A few of the ladies were busy preparing minute details for the trip. "The trunk is ready," they said. Some of the men went and tied it with a rope. All were silent for the "still waters run deep." At four o'clock the carriage from Taos came. The driver was Henry Simpson, son of the well known Captain Henry Simpson, from Taos. Mrs. Mondragon, Mrs. Salazar and many others of her friends embraced her again and again. Alice Hyson with tears in her eyes embraced her friends. She was helped to the carriage. All wanted to be near her for the last moments. The carriage pulled away.

These are just a few of the incidents in Alice Hyson's life, as a teacher here in Ranchos. They may soon be forgotten, but the impression and the spark of light and love she left in the hearts of those who knew her will never be forgotten by them, and her influence will outlive their generation.

The writer is indebted to the following persons for resource material: Corine Albright, Faith H. Haines, P. C. Hyson (brother of Alice Hyson), Dionicio Martinez, Jacobo Mondragon, Sabino Sanchez, Victoriano Valdez, Paul L. Warnshuis and Elsie Weimer. ■

*The following is a reprint of an article appearing in the December 27, 1997, issue of The Herald, a Clifton, England, newspaper.*

## The Old Spanish Trail and Its Clifton, England, Connection

RELIVING THE INCREDIBLE JOURNEY  
OF AMERICAN PIONEER  
WILLIAM WORKMAN 156 YEARS AGO

The Old Spanish Trail was the longest, crookedest, most arduous pack mule route in the history of America. Its 1200 miles connected the quaint old Spanish settlements of Santa Fe and Los Angeles in the early 19th century, when a vast area of country that was later to form the western American states of New Mexico, Arizona, Utah, Nevada and California was still part of Mexico.

Two obstacles ruled out a direct route—the mighty Colorado River and Apache territory.

The first man to attempt the Old Spanish Trail route as a settler—as opposed to a trader—was a remarkable individual called William Workman, from Clifton in Westmoreland.

William Workman was just 22 when he left home in 1822 to follow his elder brother David to Franklin, Missouri, then the western frontier of the United States, where they ran a saddlery business. In 1825 William crossed the Great Plains with a trading party on the Santa Fe Trail to the rumbustious Wild West town of Taos, New Mexico, where he became a Rocky Mountain fur trapper before marrying a local lady and going into business as a miller and store owner.

### SUSPECTED

In 1841 William and his business partner John Rowland were suspected by the local Mexicans of collaborating with Texas in the neighboring American state's designs on New Mexico, and they had to get out of town fast. Early in September of that year they got together a party of 25 men, some with their families, at Abiquiu between Santa Fe and Taos on the west side of the Rio Grande.

All of them armed and driving a flock of sheep as a fresh food supply, they set off for California, 1,200 miles away.



William Workman, from a painting by Paul Petrovits, 1876.  
Courtesy of Thomas Workman Temple II.

And they made it, for on the 5th of November, 1841, they arrived in San Gabriel Valley a few miles east of Los Angeles. Led by William Workman and his business partner, they were the first overland party of Anglo-American settlers to reach southern California.

Joined eventually by his brother David and family from Missouri, William Workman (1799-1876) prospered in California as a cattle rancher and banker and came to be regarded as a leading city-maker of Los Angeles.

On 29th December this year [1997] local historian John Sharpe, from Clifton, and his wife, Lorna, left Los Angeles by car to meet David Fallowfield, from Penrith, and Bill Ramsey, from Ulverston, at Albuquerque Airport, New Mexico.

Their objective was to retrace William Workman's necessarily circuitous route over the Old Spanish Trail from Abiquiu to Los Angeles. Mr. Sharpe recounts their experiences and reflects on what it might have been like for the first Cliftonian to traverse the route.

"Oh, boy, this is ambitious!" our genial Californian host's incredulous reaction to my outline of our mission came to mind as we plunged into the morning traffic on the Hollywood Freeway and made way for Interstate 10 out of the vast urban sprawl that is Los Angeles.

We were heading due east for New Mexico but would be coming back to Los Angeles the long way, via Utah, and we had just eight days to do it in our Dodge Intrepid. Anyway, we were soon in the Mojave Desert with traffic thinning and confidence mounting. After eight hours and around 430 miles on the road we hit the one-horse town of Seligman, Arizona, just after sundown. Couldn't see the saloon but the motel was OK.

Next day, after detours to the Grand Canyon and Meteor Crater near Flagstaff in Arizona, we mixed it with the massive rigs making east on the Interstate 40 through Navajo country to Gallup, New Mexico. At sun-up 15 US gallons went into the car for 20 dollars (12.50 British pounds) and we breakfasted well in a roadhouse on historic Route 66 among weathered native Americans and gentlemen in Stetsons. I half-expected rancher Anthony Quinn to burst in and growl menacingly to Sheriff Kirk Douglas, "Ah've come for m'boy."

### DISCONCERTING

The big freeway sign showing "Albuquerque Next 17 Exits" was a bit disconcerting for a driver more used to the M6, but we eventually found the exit road for the International Airport and met our two traveling companions on their flight from Dallas/Fort Worth, Texas.

Resting the horses that night in Santa Fe, we had already done over 1000 miles without even reaching the start of William Workman's route of 1841.

But one place we had to see was the old Spanish town of Taos, another 70 miles to the north east in the Sangre de Cristo Mountains. Sitting on a 7,000 foot plateau under 13,160 foot Wheeler Peak (highest point in New Mexico), the present tourist town and artists' colony of Taos (pop. 4000) is the place where William Workman settled in 1825.

Taos (rhymes with "house") was also the home for many years of one Christopher Houston Carson (1809-1868), better known as "Kit." His old home on Kit Carson Road is now a museum, and his grave is in the local cemetery.

### DESERTED

Kit Carson was 14 years of age in 1824 when he was

apprenticed to David and William Workman at their saddlery in Franklin, Missouri. Young Kit, though, was not happy learning the saddler's trade and deserted the shop for New Mexico in 1826, the year after William headed west.

David posted a reward for the return of the errant apprentice Kit, and his notice in the *Missouri Intelligencer* of 6th October 1826, is preserved in the museum:

Notice is hereby given to all persons,

That Christopher Carson, a boy about 16 years old, small of his age but thick-set, light hair, ran away from the subscriber living in Franklin, Missouri, to whom he had been bound to learn the saddler's trade, on or about the first of September last. He is supposed to have made his way to the upper part of the state. All persons are notified not to harbor, support or assist said boy under the penalty of the law. One cent reward will be given to any person who will bring back the said boy.  
Franklin, Oct. 6, 1826. David Workman.

Neither the "penalty of the law" nor the "one cent reward" brought Kit back.

Believe it or not, all-American hero Kit Carson, legendary mountain man, Indian fighter, frontiersman and scout, later to become a brigadier general in the U.S. Army and the man who was to give his name to the capital of the state of Nevada, began his eventful career with two lads from Clifton, Westmoreland.

Crossing the Rio Grande south of Taos on 1st November, we paused at William's old starting point of Abiquiu - incidentally, just a few miles from Los Alamos, New Mexico, where the atomic bomb was developed in the 1940s. Following the route of the Old Spanish Trail as closely as possible on modern roads, we would be traveling northwest for 500 miles to the 1841 crossing points of the Colorado and Green rivers in Utah.

William Workman's daily distances on the Trail were always dictated by the availability of water. No problem at this stage - there was the River Chama. We followed its course on US 84 with the San Juan Mountains away to our right, via Cebolla, Ensenada and Chama, crossing the Continental divide at nearly 8000 feet above sea level, to Chromo, Pagosa Springs and the old mining town of Durango, Colorado.

Southwest Colorado has an Alpine feel, with narrow wooded valleys and jagged peaks over 14,000 feet, but approaching the Utah state line near the town of Monticello, the scene changes dramatically to seemingly endless flat upland with far-distant mountain ranges. In the clear autumn air of Colorado and Utah, these big snow-capped mountains were often visible around 100 miles away. William, in 1841, must have sometimes had the same

peak ahead of him for days on end.

Biblical-sounding Moab on US 191 was approached through flat-topped mesa country with miles of weird rock formations caused by weathering. The town was soon followed by the crossing of the Colorado River in semi-desert and the junction with Interstate 70 leading into the small town of Green River, the old Trail's crossing-point of the river of that name and its northern extremity in central Utah, before turning southwest for distant California.

**GASSING-UP**

Next day, Interstate 70 over bone-dry salt and alkali flats took us towards distant broken granite ridges and canyons into the 12,000 foot mountain country around Salina, where the car needed gassing-up, as they say over there.

Incidentally, I had the easy job in front and David rode shotgun (or rather video camera) while Lorna in the rear dispensed refreshment on the move and Bill usually attended to the vehicle's wants at rest.

Thanks to David's pre-planning, we had little difficulty with route-finding. Problems with locals were few, although at Salina one of the car's tyres needed air, and Bill's query about the necessary item of garage equipment elicited the response "Airline? Salt Lake City-110 miles!"

The confusion was soon resolved, and we got the tyre blown up on the spot. Travelling southwest through small-town America like Koosharem and Panguitch and over a 10,000-foot mountain pass, our next overnight stop was at bustling Cedar City, Utah. The girl in the Sizzler diner had not even heard of Penrith, let alone Clifton. We were a long way from home.

On 4th November the dead straight road out of Cedar City led to quiet little Newcastle on the edge of the Escalante Desert, where we headed up a dirt road to the Old Spanish Trail Monument.

**DEATH VALLEY**

The stone monument marks the spot on the trail where 119 wagons in the Jefferson Hunt expedition to southern California in 1849 detached themselves from the others and made off to the northwest on hearing the upstate discovery of gold, only to meet with disaster in Death Valley. In the all-prevading silence and big blue sky of Utah, it was an evocative spot, right on the Old Spanish Trail. Just a few miles away is the imposing monument to the victims of the Mountain Meadows Massacre in September, 1857, when 120 hopeful California-bound travellers from distant Arkansas were slaughtered by Indians (aided and abetted by others with less excuse than the red men). Many were small children. Again, it was a moving sight.

The Trail took us to Gunlock on the Santa Clara River

in Utah and then through startlingly red canyon lands on to Interstate 15 and south down the Virgin River Canyon to the open desert near the Nevada state border, for the last 100 miles of the day into Las Vegas. The garish gambling capital of America would not be to everybody's taste, but it sure was an experience. We risked a walk up the street a few blocks to the Strip for a meal at Tony Roma's, but a drive-by shooting at 11 p.m. spurred us to hit the trail at sun-up.

Los Vegas to Los Angeles on Interstate 15 is nearly 300 miles of unremitting desert. As we headed southwest into the morning [sic] sun at 75 miles per hour (the general freeway speed limit) with the car's cruise control, air conditioning and stereo radio on, there was nothing to do except guess how many miles it was to point ahead where the dead-straight dual carriageway dwindled to infinity over the next ridge.

I reflected on what this arid sunlit wilderness must have meant to William Workman in 1841, 1,000 miles into the trek at walking speed with a group to look after, which included his own two children.

At 1:30 p.m. that day, 5th November, we drew up in the car park of the Workman and Temple family Homestead Museum and stepped out into the 80 degree heat of Los Angeles. It was 156 years to the day since William Workman finished his epic journey near the same spot.

**FOLKLORE**

Over these five days from Abiquiu, New Mexico, we had seen incredible vistas of mountains and mesas, plains and deserts, canyons and arroyos; and we had visited places with their roots in the history and folklore of the American West.

I, for one, was no nearer to comprehending how my illustrious Clifton predecessor could have done it.

With the dust of the Old Spanish Trail behind us, on the 6th November we were privileged to be invited to a reception and luncheon hosted by the First Century Families organisation of Los Angeles in honor of the Workman and Temple Family (F. P. F. Temple was William Workman's son-in-law).

The opulent venue was the Grand Ballroom of the Regent Beverly Wilshire Hotel in Beverly Hills, and the luncheon was excellent, consumed as it was, among the descendants of the brothers David and William.

It was food for thought that the whole thing began with the gift of 100 pounds by generous parents to 21-year-old David 6,000 miles away at Clifton on the 18th July, 1818. ■



## BOOK REVIEWS

### **Explorers, Traders, and Slavers: Forging the Old Spanish Trail: 1678-1850**

by Joseph P. Sanchez  
University of Utah Press, 1997  
Cloth \$29.95

Here is a scholarly documentation of the origins and use of the so-called Old Spanish Trail which was the Rio Arriba connection with California from about 1821 to 1850. For many years exploration and trade in that direction were prohibited by Spanish authorities, but segments of this trail were explored by New Mexico frontiersmen during clandestine and undocumented trips to visit and trade with Utes and other tribes farther west. A mythical region known as Teguayo was shown on early maps and continued to pique the interest of geographers and potential explorers. Eventually the route coalesced and became a route for trade as well as emigration to California.

The first licensed expedition under Mexican rule was by Antonio Armijo in 1829, and trade grew as New Mexicans found a place where their trade goods were needed. They frequently brought back horses, sometimes stolen, as well as Indian slaves either captured or acquired in trade.

Sanchez has included illustrations of significant old maps outlining the region. Unfortunately the maps are so small and poorly copied that they are illegible for the most part. These drawbacks are offset by his scholarly analyses, his skillful writing, and the interesting material covered. Especially interesting is his translation of the 1765 journals of Antonio de Rivera, who traveled west to the Colorado River.

— Andy Lindquist

### **Old Spanish Trail North Branch and Its Travelers**

By Ron Kessler  
Sunstone Press, Santa Fe, 1998  
Paper \$24.95

Here is another view of the Old Spanish Trail. This book addresses the specific branch of the trail that includes Taos, and in contrast to the Sanchez book, its maps and photos allow the reader to locate and visit segments of the actual trail sites. It also features expedition narratives that are different from the many detailed sources cited by Sanchez.

The North Branch of the Old Spanish Trail started in Santa Fe and went north, either through Taos or Ojo Caliente into what is now Colorado, and joined the other trail branches at what is now Crescent Junction near Green River, Utah. Kessler includes a number of excerpts from journals of some of the people who used parts of these trails, such as de Vargas,

de Anza, Pike, and Ruxton, and others who went all the way to California.

Interest continues to grow in the Old Spanish trail as an important focus of early travel from Spanish times to the present, involving five different states. Congress has authorized a study of the trail for its national importance and possible listing as a National Historic Trail. The trail is especially interesting to us because it is close at hand and involves people and events important to the history of New Mexico.

— A. L.

### **Valley of Shining Stone: The Story of Abiquiu**

by Lesley Poling-Kempes  
The University of Arizona Press, Tucson  
Paper

Taos readers will be interested in this book because much of Abiquiu history parallels that of Taos, and nearly as many of the same historic figures, historic developments, and historic events are discussed as would be found in a Taos historic account. Poling-Kempes provides us with an entertaining narrative about the the land and people of the Piedra Lumbre Valley, the struggles between the Pueblo people and later the *genizaro* and Hispanic settlers with the Navajos and Apaches, and still later encounters with the Anglo tourists, artists, and others who were attracted to the beauty and isolation of the area. She includes accounts of the early land grant history as well as the struggles of the 1960s and 70s.

For years, the Abiquiu area was a contact point between the different Indian tribes, and under Spanish colonial rule, was a border crossing and trading center between the settlements along the Rio Grande and the nomadic tribes to the west. This crossing later became the jumping-off point for travelers on the Old Spanish Trail heading for California. In more recent times the valley became the focus of conservationist Arthur Pack's dude ranch, which he named Ghost Ranch, and Georgia O'Keeffe's home and source of inspiration for more than 50 years at both the Ghost Ranch and the Abiquiu Plaza.

No history can be complete, and we frequently find that authors have not provided all of the information concerning people or events we personally are interested in. In this case we would like to know more about the ordinary residents of the Piedra Lumbre area rather than the rich and famous. We also complain when factual errors are found or sources not cited. These things are true of *Valley of Shining Stone*, but the narratives and illustrations are so engaging and the portrayals so authentic that we forgive the author for not making the book four times as long. She has truly given us the feel of a magical and enigmatic place.

— R. Danby Fillmore



# TAOS TIME CAPSULE



## JOHN DUNN NOT WORRIED

John Dunn, the well-known garage man of Taos, when asked what he thought of Mr. Harding for President, said in a nasal tone, "I figure that a man who wears a size 6 1/2 hat hasn't any business worrying about who is going to be President."

— *Carson Pine Cone*, Feb. 14, 1919

## WOLF KILLS SHEEP

On April 20, on the San Antone District, a Lobo wolf jumped into a sheep corral made of willows. There were 350 sheep in this corral. One sheep was killed in the corral and 34 sheep and goats were found killed and scattered for half a mile around. . . since then there were were 15 or 20 more found dead. The total loss for that night was 80 sheep and goats.

— *Carson Pine Cone*, May 4, 1926

## A TRIP TO BLUE LAKE

Ranger (L. P.) Martinez left for Blue Lake yesterday to do further trail work. Blue Lake is situated at an elevation of about 11,600 feet and its beauty is becoming better known each year. Many people who come to Taos are now anxious to take the trip and it can only be made on horseback, the improvement of the trail is important. A ranger cabin was constructed there this summer which is an added asset. . . Blue Lake is closed to people at certain times of the year on account of the Indian ceremonials held there.

— *Carson Pine Cone*, Oct. 21, 1927

## LA POSTA NEWS

A wire has come from the Mother Regina in Chicago to Mabel Luhan which reads as follows: "Received abstract and your telegram Sisters will come next week."

The sisters are expected to be here by the time this goes to press and La Posta is in complete readiness for them. The water is connected and also the lights, the beds and linens are there, and the whole place has been cleaned by the good Taoseñas. We wish that everybody would go down to La Posta and see that all the essentials are there for the establishment of a perfect little hospital.

— *The Taos Review*, Nov. 13, 1936

## FIRE BURNS FAMED LODGE AT RED RIVER

The well known Monte Vista Lodge at Red River was destroyed by fire early Saturday and only a 30 inch blanket of snow on an adjoining roof kept the flames from spreading to a large section of the famed mountain resort. More than 50 Monte Vista guests, all persons taking advantage of Red River's first winter ski season were forced out of the building into 23 below zero weather. No one was injured.

— *The Taos News*, Jan. 7, 1960

## MABEL DODGE LUHAN DIES EARLY MONDAY

Funeral services were held for Mrs. Mabel Dodge Luhan yesterday at the St. James Episcopal Church with burial in the historic Kit Carson Cemetery. Officiating was the Right Reverend C. J. Kinsolving III, Bishop of the Diocese of New Mexico and Southwest Texas.

Mr. Luhan, who had been in failing health for the last year, died at Holy Cross Hospital early Monday morning. Longtime patroness of the artists and writers colony, socialite and author, Mrs. Luhan had made her permanent home here since her first trip in 1915.

— *The Taos News*, Aug. 16, 1962

## CARS USED TO LIGHT AIRSTRIP AT NIGHT

A "mystery pilot" circled the Bill Miller airstrip for a couple of hours Tuesday evening, and some 50 cars, the fire department and two state highway patrolmen tried to light the airstrip by means of car lights, but after circling for more than an hour, the plane veered south and disappeared in the direction of Albuquerque.

— *The Taos News*, Sept. 12, 1963

## STATE STUDIES NEW RELIEF ROUTE

The State Highway Department has proposed yet another relief route and a plan to make two major streets one way. The ABC route would be a four lane highway with a 150 foot right of way and would head west, off South Santa Fe Road, from the Raton bypass. It would intersect SR 3 at a point between the north branch of Centinel Bank and El Charro Cafe.

— *The Taos News*, Jan. 9, 1986



TAOS COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
P.O. BOX 2447  
TAOS, NEW MEXICO 87571

TO: