

AYER Y HOY en TAOS

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

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The Talpa Torreón as depicted in a photograph probably made in 1955 according to Corina Santistevan. Pictured (left) Helen Blumenschien and torreón owner Antonio José Vigil (right).

Call for Historic Preservation

**Talpa Torreón
St. Vrain Gristmill**

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and Northern New Mexico

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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 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.

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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 \$15 for individuals, \$20 for families, and \$30 for sustaining Memberships.

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The Taos County Historical Society is a New Mexico nonprofit 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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P.O. Box 2447 – Taos, New Mexico 87571
(<http://www.silverhawk.com/taos/tchs>)

Contents

The Talpa Torreon: A Taos Treasure By Peter Mackaness	page 3
Ceran St. Vrain Taos Gristmill By Andy Lindquist	page 7
Photos	page 10
Book Reviews:	page 11
<i>Land of Enchantments,</i>	
<i>Land of Conflict</i>	
<i>Of Time and Change</i>	
<i>Six Nuevo Mexico Folk Dramas</i>	
<i>The Magical Realism of Alyce Frank</i>	
<i>The Contested Plains</i>	
<i>Picuris Pueblo Through Time</i>	
<i>My Land Sings</i>	
<i>La Musica de los Viejitos</i>	
<i>Rio del Norte</i>	

Letter from the Editor

In this issue two TCHS members offer detailed information about two historic sites in the county that they would like to see preserved. Peter Mackaness writes about the Talpa Torreon and Andy Lindquist writes about the Ceran St. Vrain Gristmill. Hopefully these two articles will spawn further discussion of the sites and inspire support for preservation efforts.

This is my last issue as editor of this journal. Much to my surprise what was to be a part-time voluntary position has turned into a full-time voluntary position. Due to professional commitments, writing schedules and time restraints I am resigning my position as editor of *Ayer y Hoy*. Persons interested in the job should contact Andy Lindquist at 751-0935.

Mary Ann Wells



The Talpa Torreón: A Taos Treasure



By Peter Mackaness
(First in the Foot Print Series)

Hemmed in by a ring of mountains on the north, east, and south, and the Rio Grande Gorge on the west, Taos Valley is a natural solar collector, because of its unusual horseshoe shape, with its open end so perfectly oriented toward the southwest and the low sun of winter. Strategically sited on an open plain, well-watered by irrigation ditches, this ancient valley is a natural cross-roads trading center with north-south trails along both sides of the Rio Bravo, or Great River of the North, and east-west fords across it, as well as numerous passes to the Great Plains through the Sangre de Cristo Mountains to the east, and through the Picuris Mountains to the south.

A thousand years ago, the ancestors of today's Taos Pueblo Indians took advantage of Taos' fertile

valley, situated on the western slope of the southern spur of the Rocky Mountains. Recognizing its true value, they settled here to hunt, gather and farm. When Spanish colonists arrived in the 17th century they observed the prosperity of the indigenous people and quickly realized the region's potential for trade and agriculture and, also, settled here. By the beginning of the 18th century, news of Taos' abundant stores reached nomadic Apache, Comanche, Navajo and Ute Indians, who had only recently adopted horses for transportation. These warrior horsemen swept down the various trails to raid the Taos Pueblo Indians and their Spanish neighbors.

To ward off the frequent attacks the sedentary farmers, in total probably no more than 500 people, were forced to set up a defense system, which took the form of walled compounds with adjoining guard towers. Throughout the Taos Valley, each village

and settlement devised a series of look-outs that covered an area about 20 miles long by five miles wide.

The highest point around was Look-out Mountain (Devisadero Peak), 9,000 feet above the valley and just south and east of San Geronimo de Taos. It became the primary observation point. Down below, the people built fortified adobe-room blocks around a central plaza or placita with stout gates and no external window openings, erecting defensive towers at the corners. Almost all the towers were erected in line-of-sight of each other. This plan assured the inhabitants that they would not be surprised by raiding Indians.

The settlement pattern in Spain is reflected in the grid of villages in New Spain, even in El Valle de Taos. No habitation was separated by more than one or two miles. The 25 towns were arranged like the beads on a rosary and their beacon towers were fairly evenly distributed. The way this warning system worked was simple and effective, much like the military DEW line of the 1960s. It made no difference from which direction the raiders came. Utes and Apaches usually came from the north, east and west; Navajos from the north and west; Comanches from the north, east and south. Trails used were the Ute, Lobo, Glorieta, Cañon, Kiowa, Rio Chiquito, Pot Creek, El Camino Real, Apodaca, Cordillera, Rio Pueblo, Taos Junction, Rio Hondo or Navajo.

Invaders could be spotted coming into the valley from any one of these many routes. During the 200 years between 1700 and 1900, the llanos, mesas and valles of Taos were almost totally devoid of tall trees. It was a landscape of shrubs and bushes like chamisa and sagebrush, small trees like juniper and pinon and native grasses like grama or wheatgrass. It was quite easy to see from one end of the valley to the other—from Rio Vista (the top of Pilar Hill) to Upper Desmontes (above the Rio Hondo). The approach of any riders would be revealed by the clouds of dust from the vantage point of a 20 to 30 foot tall *torreón*.

Two or three hundred years later only two *torreónes* remain of the 50 to 75 originals. One is intact, the other in ruins. It is no small wonder these have survived at all, considering they are

made of mud and wood and are vulnerable to erosion and rot. The first of the two, shaped like a bell, is located north of Don Fernando de Taos and La Placita in the village of El Prado, once known as Los Estiercoles (the stables), and just 100 yards east of US Highway 64. Continually maintained since its construction, it remains in good repair, a silent but unused sentinel in front of the sacred Taos Mountain and its pueblo.

The second *torreón* is the real treasure. Hidden away a quarter of a mile east of Ranchos on NM 68 and 50 yards south of NM 518, the Antonio José Vigil family *torreón* sits forlornly on the north rim of the Ranchos valley, at the southeastern end of Taos valley, about a mile west of the hamlet of Talpa.

This ancient monument is strategically sited at the edge of a llano overlooking the once-walled Spanish village of Ranchos de Taos with its focal point the San Francisco de Asis Church, and above the old Cordillera Trail (now called Valerio Road and NM 240) that runs along the base of the Ranchos-Talpa ridge. It is situated a mile west of the Camino Real that ran from Taos pueblo, the northern terminus of the prehistoric Indian and Spanish colonial Chihuahua Trail, through Santa Fe and El Paso to Chihuahua, Mexico City and on to Veracruz. This old fort has endured for two and a half centuries or longer. Its position reveals that it was fully functioning and an integral part of the Taos tower network.

But even with the *torreon* network in place, at the height of the raiding period from 1760 to 1780 most all the Spanish in the valley retreated to the security of a much-reinforced Taos Pueblo. There, special *casa reales* (royal houses) provided the villagers a protective residence behind stout ten-foot high adobe walls, complete with seven defensive towers at the corners and entrances of the five-sided perimeter of the pueblo enclosure. The bitter lesson of the 1760 massacre by Comanches of the inhabitants of La Lomita plaza on Ledoux Street at the southwestern edge of Don Fernando de Taos had so terrified the Indian and Spanish people of the valley that they felt compelled to band together in the safest place in the area, Taos Pueblo.

The Vigil clan, however, chose to remain in the no-man's-land near Talpa, where they continued to raise animals and crops and sought safety in their miniature turret only when the raiders appeared. The Vigils had constructed the tower themselves, which is in many ways the torreón classic archetype. The first story is round, about 18 feet in its outside diameter, with two-foot thick walls of adobe brick, roughly ten feet high. The ceiling contains seven *vigas*, spaced on two-foot intervals, across the top of which are *rajas*, split-cedar planks, or rough boards, *tablas*, covered with two feet of packed earth. Built into the southwest wall was a low doorframe two feet wide by five feet high by two feet deep and a door set within. At the southwest and southeast corners were two small barred window-openings about one foot wide and two feet high. On the northeastern side of the torreón is another window-opening two feet high by four feet wide. This appears to be a later addition, but it may be that there was an original smaller opening that was later enlarged. A descendant of the grant settler, Antonio José Vigil, reported that until 1910 this tower had a six-sided upper story of logs, bringing its total height to about 20 feet. No doubt there were four to six ports about one foot wide and two feet high cut into the logs on each of the sides.

The earliest photographic record of the Vigil torreón dates to circa 1965. At that time both windows and door and doorframe were intact, as was the entire first floor, but there is no evidence of a second-story. A typical feature of many flat-roofed adobe structures in northern New Mexico, a wooden *canal*, or drainage spout, appears intact in 1965. The interior of the torreón exhibits a sunken floor, much like a prehistoric Indian pit house. Remnants of a wooden window shutter show in two other photographs. It is very probable that there was a trap-door hole in the ceiling for access by ladder to the second floor. It is also possible that there was a door in the log upper story for access by ladder from the outside.

A very recent survey of the building reveals a quickly eroding thin covering of cement plaster over chicken wire added in the late 1970s. By the end of the 20th century the old door and the door-

frame, one window unit and the canal have disappeared. The roof is caving in; the *vigas* and *rajas* are exposed and rotting. In five more years, without preservation, this entire venerable architectural gem will melt back into the earth from which it was made. It would be a shame and an irreparable cultural loss for a structure so unique to Taos to vanish without a trace.

The pressing need for torreones in the Taos Valley faded about 1795 with De Anza's successful expedition against Chief Cuerno Verde and his Comanche band and the subsequent treaty with the survivors. By 1850, the presence of US soldiers in northern New Mexico had ended the threat of Indian raids and the need for such fortified towers. The torreones had outlived their usefulness. From 1850 until 2000, the defensive towers disappeared and much like the gristmill (*el molino*) and the penitente chapel (*la morada*) were no longer essential features of an anachronistic infrastructure. Most of the towers, neglected over time, were simply dismantled for their usable materials or dissolved quietly back into the earth.

The two torreones still standing in the Taos area have survived only because they were converted to other uses—a chicken house in the case of the El Prado torreón and a storeroom (*dispensa*) in the case of the Vigil torreón. But as people's lifestyles changed in the latter part of the 20th century the need for such outbuildings lessened, so these once noble structures were abandoned.

In the early part of the 19th century, the Vigils and the family patriarch, Antonio José Vigil, lived in an *estancia*, a permanent homestead adjacent to the valley pastureland. It was a small farm. The footprints of existent buildings suggest that when the Vigils first erected their torreón that they placed it apart from the main adobe placita-centered room complex with its barns, corrals and other outbuildings. This meant that the 20 or so individuals of this ranchito had an almost unobstructed view of the surrounding countryside from their fort. And this bulwark defense was important; it represented the difference between life and death on the isolated Spanish colonial frontier, which was made so volatile by groups of nomadic Plains Indian.

In its heyday, the Talpa turret fulfilled a multitude of purposes. Its five-fold function was as a watchtower (*el mirador*), a signal tower (*el centinel*), a beacon or lighthouse (*el farol*), a battle platform (*el estacion de la lucha*) and as a sanctuary (*el refugio*). To visualize how this sturdy fort worked, imagine a time long ago, say 1770. From a perch on Devisadero peak a lookout from Taos Pueblo saw a band of hostile Comanches coming down the Kiowa Trail in Taos Canyon. If it was daytime, the lookout would build a quick fire, and using a wet blanket create a series of smoke signals that could be seen by all the scattered villages in the valley. Each settlement would send up an answering series of smoke signals in acknowledgement of the warning. All the male settlers rushed in from the fields, the families hid their cattle, horses and sheep in corrals and placitas, then sought shelter in the torreón. The settlers had few muskets so they depended on a supply of lances, spears, rocks, crossbows and arrows already on hand in the tower to defend themselves. As the Indians raced in for the attack the whole arsenal of weapons was fired down on them including on occasion cauldrons of boiling fat. If night had fallen, the watchers in the lookout tower lit large fires or set up a host of blazing torches to alert the neighboring communities. Sometimes drums were beaten, horns blown and bells rung accompanied by shouts and yells.

Not all torreones had the same shape, size and style. The El Prado and Talpa towers were round and stood alone. At Canon, Taos Pueblo and Ranchos de Taos, the towers were built into or onto the fortified perimeter plaza walls, at the corners or beside the gates and were square or rectangular in shape. Another variant example of a tower stood on the rooftop of a *casa mayor* like that just above the present entrance of the Martinez Hacienda in Lower Ranchitos.

To put torreones in a historical context as unique forms and as a specialized type of military architecture adapted to local needs, it must be remembered that these traditional towers had precedents among the Anasazi Indians in the form of round stone masonry cylinders from 1000 to 1500 A.D., and among European people in the form of

crenelated castle turrets built from 500 to 1800 A.D.

The Talpa torreón was simply built, and would be simple to salvage and save. For a minimum investment of time, materials and labor, this circle of adobe bricks could be totally and accurately restored to near-original state. Restored this torreón could be a source of local pride for generations to come. Its restoration and registry in the national and state historical inventory would be a worthy project for the Taos County Historical Society.

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Ceran St. Vrain's Taos Gristmill

By Andy Lindquist, President of the TCHS

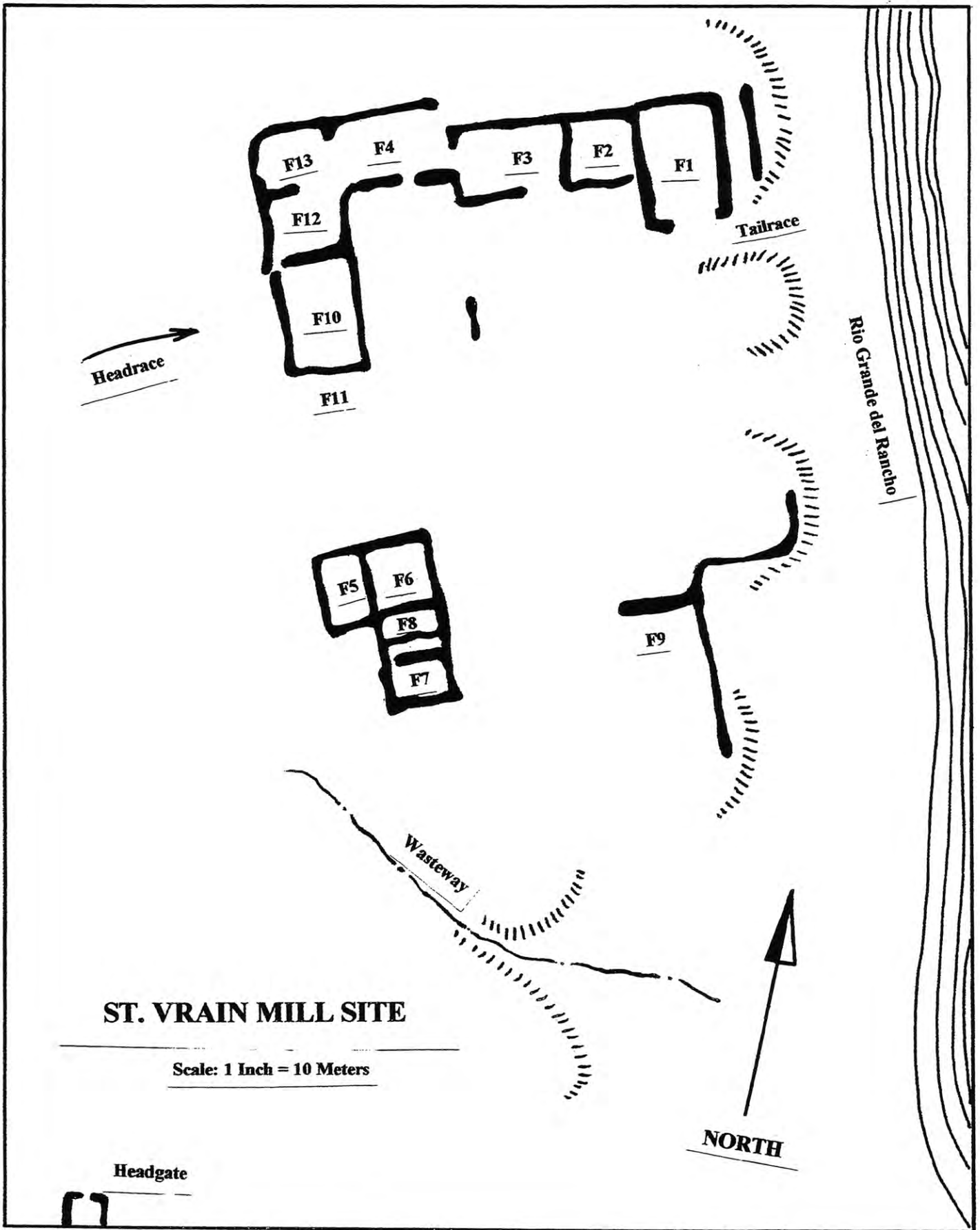
Ceran St. Vrain was born in 1801, the second of ten children in a family who lived in the French community of Spanish Lake, near St. Louis, in what later became Missouri. When he was 16, his father died and he was sent to live in the home of Bernard Pratte, Sr. He soon became a clerk in the Pratte store in St. Louis and then progressed to managing fur shipments and was involved in the trade of the Pratte's Missouri River outposts. In 1824, he secured a small consignment of trade goods on credit, and in partnership with Francois Guerin made his first journey west, reaching Taos in March of 1825. For reasons he declared "two teajus [sic] to mention," he bought out his partner for \$100 and two mules and began a career in trading, fur trapping and Santa Fe Trail commerce, both on his own and in partnership with historic figures such as Charles and William Bent, Bill Williams, Thomas "Pegleg" Smith, Kit Carson, Paul Baillio, Cornelio Vigil and Lucien Maxwell. For the next 39 years he lived principally in Taos. He maintained a store on the south side of the Plaza and became a Mexican citizen. At various times, he published a newspaper, was public printer for the New Mexico Territory, and was an organizer and officer of various militia units during the U.S. war with Mexico and the American Civil War. During his lifetime, he became very wealthy as a partner in the Animas Land Grant, owner of various sawmills and a land speculator in land around Canon City and Denver, Colorado. Later in life he became interested in railroad and bank investments. In 1855, he moved to Mora where he lived until his death in 1870. Allegedly, he was married four times.¹

In 1848, New Mexico became a part of the United States. It immediately became evident that military forces would have to be stationed at various locations to protect settlements and commerce from continuing depredations by various Indian tribes. The number of men at these army posts would require large quantities of supplies. During Spanish colonial and Mexican times, wheat was

grown in many locations in New Mexico, but primarily for home consumption. Mills were small, mostly powered by hand or by draft animals. These mills were incapable of producing the quantities of flour needed to feed the people and the troops. It was at this time that Ceran St. Vrain became interested in the flour milling business. In 1849, he obtained a contract to furnish the army with one million pounds of flour each year for three years. Immediately he went to Westport (now Kansas City) where he hired five experienced millers and purchased five French burr mills which he planned to install at sites to be constructed at Taos, Mora, Peralta and Santa Fe. These were all areas where wheat was being raised.²

The Taos mill was located on the westside of the Rio Grande del Rancho above Talpa about three miles upstream from the Ranchos de Taos Plaza. Operation of the mill probably started in 1850. The mill continued producing until 1864 when it burned. Fort Burgwin, the U.S. Army post nearest Taos, had been closed in 1860. Evidently other competing mills were meeting the area demand for flour, so rebuilding the Taos mill was not a profitable proposition. There is evidence that someone named Tramley, or Trambley, rebuilt and operated a mill on the Taos site almost 30 years later, probably about 1892, until about 1901. A few years later, the mill site was acquired as part of the Rio Grande del Rancho Grant by the Santa Barbara Pole and Tie Company. After passing through several other owners, the grant was acquired about 1960 by the United States government through a land for timber exchange and made part of the Carson National Forest.

One of the effects of the mill during the time it operated was to further stimulate the cultivation of wheat in the Taos area. The area was already known as "the breadbasket of New Mexico." At the time, there was limited grazing and hay available in Taos on account of the intensive cultivation of wheat. In later years, there were large flour mills in both Ranchos and Taos all of which are now gone. Recently, Taos area farmers have tried to reintro-



ST. VRAIN MILL SITE

Scale: 1 Inch = 10 Meters

Headgate



duce wheat production by bringing back old wheat varieties to be grown using organic methods for use by specialty regional bakeries. Currently there is no flour mill operating in the Taos Valley.

The New Mexico flour product was apparently a little cruder than imported flour. In 1850, a board of survey was convened in Santa Fe to report on the quality of the flour being purchased. After tasting bread baked from samples furnished, the board concluded that the New Mexico bread was lighter in weight, but less porous and therefore less digestible, and it contained grit. One inspector called it "dark, coarse and gritty." But apparently it was acceptable under the contract as there is no record of the Army complaining.³

Milling activity during the days of Mexican rule (1821-1846) was frequently accompanied by grain fermenting and distilling operations for the production of whisky, and there were a number of such operations in the Taos area. The product became well-known throughout the west as "Taos Lightning." There is no evidence that any distilling was done at the St. Vrain Taos mill. It is possible a still site existed somewhere in the vicinity earlier since a still operated by Mathew Kinkead, Samuel Chambers and William Workman was rumored to have been located "about three miles up the Little Rio Grande from Ranchos"⁴ This would place it very close to the site where the St. Vrain mill was later constructed. This distillery was also said to have served as a secret repository for furs and other contraband being moved through New Mexico, but the alleged operations ceased long before the establishment of the St Vrain mill.

After the Tramley (Trambley) Mill closed about 1902 or 1903, roof beams and other building materials were probably hauled away for use elsewhere. Without roofs, the adobe buildings melted away. Whatever else was on the site was abandoned. Gradually the St. Vrain Mill was forgotten. Archaeological surveys by Southern Methodist University in 1972 resulted in rediscovery and identification of the forgotten mill. During a three-week period in July 1973 the St. Vrain Mill site was mapped, excavated and documented by SMU students at Ft. Burgwin. The artifacts found were catalogued and archived. This evidence showed that the buildings at the site had been constructed of

wood on rubble stone footings, that a fire had occurred, and that after a "substantial" period suggested by a layer of sterile deposition, that buildings were reconstructed on the earlier footings using adobe, some being added and some reconfigured.⁵ A crudely carved cornerstone was found on the site which bears the date 5/7/82 [1882] and the initials "JCM" and may indicate that the second period of use may have started on that date. Testimony of informants in 1973 indicates that the mill site was completely abandoned about 1903.

The sketch map of the site appearing with this article shows the locations of eleven features, identified as F-1 through F-11. These were located by first mapping exposed features, then exposing walls and corners that had been covered through moving sediment over time, then excavating test pits to floor level.

Because the site was only partially excavated, definite conclusions regarding the uses and dates of every feature are not possible. It would take considerable study to create an exact model of all of the activity, the appearance and function of each of the features on the site. The location, arrangement, construction of and the artifacts associated with each of these features suggest the purpose and use during the different periods known for the site.

Features 1-3 were the mill house and appurtenant structures. Feature 1 is evidently the mill house because of the lowered floor and machine parts found there, and its location next to a stone lined millrace along its southern wall. Feature 2 was evidently a place for storing grain based on a deposit of wood scraps.

Feature 4 was a blacksmith shop, probably not an enclosed room, but an open or partly covered work area. In it were found horseshoes, a bit, a horse's hoof, nails and other metal objects, as well as a deposit of ash and charcoal near the south wall.

Features 5-8 represent a house or living quarters associated only with the first mill. Two 1970s informants state that this building was not present when they saw the site in the early 1900s. Artifacts found such as painted *tierra blanca*, wallpaper, hairpins, a coffeepot, baby shoe, china, spoon and a porcelain doorknob indicate that people lived here.

Features 10-13 were only partly excavated, but wall outlines showed partitioned rooms in an

abode-walled building. Test trenches during the site excavation indicate that the original sluiceway to the mill passed through this site, so it is probably the remains of a building used in the latter period of the site's use when a different ditch seems to have been used. The building was probably used for living quarters or storage rooms.

This interesting site associated with the history of New Mexico deserves careful preservation and perhaps further study. A nomination to the National Register was prepared and sent to the State Historic Preservation Office in 1986 by the Carson National Forest, but the paperwork was returned for more detail. Because of many higher priority projects the Carson National Forest has been unable to work on the nomination. Perhaps completion of this nomination would be a good project for the Taos County Historical Society. What do you think?

¹ Dunham, Harold H., *Mountain Men and Fur Traders of the Far West*, University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln, Nebraska, 1965.

² Frazer, R. W., *Purveyors of Flour to the Army*, in *New Mexico Historical Review* XLVII:3

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Miller, "Skip" Keith, *Taos Lightnin'* Volume 1, No. 1, Winter 1996

⁵ SMU, Ft. Burgwin, Reports of 1973 Evacuation of Site TA-600



The author, Andy Lindquist, on a bridge he constructed for a Society trip to the St Vrain mill site.

Durán Mill

A surviving gristmill at Ranchos de Taos built and operated by Inocencio Durán circa 1900 may have been constructed similar to the Taos St. Vrain mill, according to TCHS president Andy Lindquist. The Durán mill is located on the Acequia Madre (the main ditch) of the Rio Grande del Rancho. Pictured at the millrace, which runs under the building, is Yolanda Romero. Photo courtesy of Corina Santistevan.



Book Reviews



Land of Enchantment, Land of Conflict: New Mexico in English Language Fiction by David L. Caffey, Texas A&M University Press, 1999. Photos, bibliography (works cited), index, 235 pages. Cloth, \$29.95

How fortunate Taoseños were to have had David Caffey as curator and library director at the Harwood Museum and as editor of our publication in years past. His knowledge of New Mexican fiction ranks him with other literary critics such as Richard Etulain and Robert Gish.

The title of this book is aptly chosen, for while New Mexico is indeed the land of enchantment, all major fiction relies upon conflict and its resulting tension to achieve true greatness and originality. Our three cultures provide such conflict, both in regard to their value systems, economic outlooks and social identities.

What makes Caffey's book outstanding is his broad outlook of New Mexican literature from its earliest days down to the present time, covering the whole broad range of New Mexican history.

He covers the writings of early fiction writers, mainly forgotten today, writers who were more inclined to myth making in the dime novels about Kit Carson and Billy the Kid. Also, he covers the writers of the golden age of New Mexican fiction writers such as Willa Cather, D. H. Lawrence,

Oliver La Farge and Frank Waters. Still later he writes of other major writers such as John Nichols, Rudolfo Anaya, Tony Hillerman, N. Scott Momaday, Max Evans and Edward Abbey as well as a host of minor writers.

Where criticism of certain writers exists or there is controversy about the writing, he makes a fair effort to cover the various points of controversy, he makes a fair effort to cover all points. For example, he contrasts Frank Waters' novel *The Woman at Otowi Crossing* with Peggy Pond Church's non-fiction account of the same story. He is particularly insightful about the novels of northern New Mexico.

Caffey's preface is a fine introduction to the work and helps to explain his fascination with New Mexico and its literature. A quote comes to mind that helps explain the fascination with the literature of New Mexico. H.L. Mencken in commenting on Cather's *Death Comes for the Archbishop* said, "The old Southwest is made to palpitate with such light and heat that...the people that gallop across the scene are full of the juices of life."

---T.N. Luther

Of Time and Change by Frank Waters, McMurray & Beck, Denver, Colorado, 1998. Photos. 272 pages. Cloth, \$20

Rudolfo Anaya wrote the foreword to this book and Waters wrote a short preface explaining the contents. The book is very interesting reading, especially for those of us who have lived in Taos many years and knew the author and most of the personalities he sketches.

The author begins by telling the readers of his own childhood, his family and family home in Colorado Springs, and of his travels that ultimately brought him to Taos and his final chosen home. Waters tells us about his close friendship with his pueblo neighbors and the great adventures he had with Tony Luhan, Mabel Dodge's last husband. He

also paints a warm picture of Mabel and his friendship with her and of her circle of friends and the arts community she was instrumental in bringing to Taos.

The range of stories is large and include among other personalities Frieda Lawrence, Lady Brett, Little Joe (*The Man Who Killed the Deer*), Spud Johnson and Leon Gaspard. Nicolai Fechin and his wife, Tinka, whom Fechin divorced in 1933 are included in the stories. Waters also writes of his acquaintance with Eya, their daughter, and gives us some insight into her relationship with her parents. Also mentioned are Ralph Meyers, Andrew Dasburg, Burt Phillips and many more.

The stories flow and one gets so engrossed it becomes difficult to put the book down. There are also numerous photographs that are rare and of historical interest. I highly recommend reading this book—a grand finale of a great writer.

Six Nuevomexicano Folk Dramas for Advent Season, translated and illustrated by Larry Torres, University of New Mexico Press. Index, illustrations, 194 pages. Paper, \$15.95.

The publication of this book was very timely in the fall of 1999, right before the Advent Season. The author's direct translation on each page is very helpful to those readers who do not read or understand Spanish. I found the flow and rhythm of the Spanish verses to be the most enjoyable. I saw the drama presentation of *Los Pastores* at the newly restored church in Las Trampas several years ago, but this was the only one of the six plays that I had seen performed.

These translations by Torres make it possible for everyone interested in folk dramas and historical presentations of Spanish culture to understand them. An introduction to each play further explains the dramas in detail. This book is an excellent addition to the collection of literature of the Southwest and in particular to those interested in the preservation of the culture and origins of traditions, which have been kept ongoing through the years by the people of Nuevo Mexico.

----Sadie O. Knight

The Magical Realism of Alyce Frank by Joseph Dispenza, published by New Mexico Magazine Artist Series, distributed by University of New Mexico Press, 1999. Photos, illustrations, 95 pages. Cloth, \$38.95

True art captures the essence of a place and offers viewers a new way of seeing the familiar. Perhaps only to the residents of Taos will the painted world of Alyce Frank seem really familiar. We know the magic world she sketches on her canvases and colors from her unique palette. We also know that she has reached beyond the ordinary to touch the spiritual essence of each place and time her brush captures. There are few more delightful events in the everyday life of Taos than seeing a new offering from Alyce Frank in the window of the Fenix Gallery on the Paseo. Her visions make our souls sing. With her magic painterly essence we are transported to that spiritual moment more than a century ago when the first artists began to colonize the town. Her visions, though stylistically different from those early artists' works, croon a lyric that fully explains why those first artists were mesmerized by the place.

Dispenza tells Frank's personal story in short installments interspersed with full-color reproductions from her works. Painting was a second career that she took up for the first time when she moved to the Taos area 30 years ago. Her method of *plein air* painting with a friend—driving into the countryside for a day with a picnic in her ancient station wagon re-enforces a romantic image of artists. The steps in the process of creating a Frank painting are fully outlined. Frank's style has been called primitive, but she uses the term "Taos expressionism" to describe her work.

This is simply a beautiful book that will bless each reader with a special joy at being able to view so many Alyce Frank paintings at one time.

----Mary Ann Wells





The Contested Plains: Indians, Goldseekers, and the Rush to Colorado by Elliot West, University Press of Kansas, Lawrence, 1998. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index, 422 pages. Cloth, \$34.95.

The author divides this book into three parts: Visions, The Gold Rush and Power. Geographically, the book mainly deals with the regions of Kansas, Nebraska and Colorado between the North Platte and Arkansas rivers. He briefly treats the prehistoric and anthropological aspects of the Plains region, then centers the book on the Colorado Gold Rush of 1858 and the resulting devastation to the Plains environment. This was a continuation of a process already set in place by Plains Indians who had earlier migrated into that fragile grassland. A very large portion of this book details the difficult journeys made by Easterners across an often unforgiving terrain.

West sets up a conflict between Plains Indians, mainly Cheyenne, and encroaching gold seekers and their entrepreneurial fellow travelers for the rapidly decreasing resources of grass, timber and water. He suggests that even before the arrival of railroads the vast herds of bison had been reduced and that the precious stands of timber used by wintering tribes had been all but obliterated by rapacious interlopers carving out roads and establishments along the several routes into Colorado. The fact that the Plains tribes had adopted the horse as their method of locomotion and warfare meant that diminishing grass and wintering camps directly impaired Indian mobility and their ability to defend themselves.

While West vigorously decries the atrocities visited upon the Indians by such questionable char-

acters as John M. Chivington, the militiaman who instigated the 1864 Sand Creek Massacre, and does a credible job of portraying American Indians as living, breathing human beings, he also places part of the blame for Indian economic devastation on the tribes themselves. By adopting huge herds of horses, the necessity for ample forage became more and more crucial to the welfare of Plains tribes. As the Indians prospered on the ample buffalo herds and wooded foothill resources of the eastern Rocky Mountains, they also grew and began to strain their environment as they nomadically ranged along the Western Plains. It became inevitable that the existing resources could not support both the American intruders and the wandering tribes.

Although this book has garnered major awards for the author's writing style and scholarship, it also has attracted critics who choose to see the Plains Indians more as victims than as unwitting accomplices to their own defeat. It is to be expected that a work of this magnitude would engender such disparity among critics.

---Samuel Wells

Picuris Pueblo Through Time: Eight Generations of Change at A Northern Rio Grande Pueblo, edited by Michael Adler and Herbert W. Dick. William P. Clements Center for Southwest Studies, Southern Methodist University, Dallas, 1999. Illustrations, references, 231 pages. Paper, \$22.95.

Picuris Pueblo, one of the oldest continually occupied pueblos, is both a part and apart from the Pueblo culture. For nearly a thousand years, the mountain people or pe'ewi—the literal translation from northern Tiwa—have experienced interaction, cultural isolation and exodus. Nonetheless, this frontier settlement has endured, remaining vibrant despite social changes, regional migrations and environmental distresses.

In the early 1960s, Picuris Pueblo tribal officials agreed to let Dr. Herbert Dick conduct extensive archaeological excavations in their village. Dick's team of multidisciplinary specialists approached the project from several vantage points. As a result,

through years of excavation and analysis, Dick and his colleagues compiled one of the most comprehensive human-occupation records to ever be recovered in North America.

Tragically, Dick and his right-hand man, Daniel Wolfman, did not live to publish the research, which they so painstakingly collected. That was left to a younger generation of archaeologists who followed in their footsteps, building upon their research.

Dr. Michael Adler met Dick at Fort Burgwin while conducting an open-house at the archaeological site at Pot Creek. The younger SMU anthropology professor quickly realized that he had much to learn from Dick and the Picuris Pueblo data and artifacts that the retired Adams College professor had stored at Fort Burgwin.

After Dick and Wolfman died, Adler began to compile materials from Dick's personal archives and manuscripts. The SMU professor edited and updated the writing completed by both Dick, Wolfman and other scholars involved in the project. Much of this material was written prior to 1967. The book also contains new materials written by Adler, Helen Crotty, Richard Mermejo and Steve Conway. Although, Adler admits that the earlier scholarly work required extensive editing and rewriting, he explicitly states that the integrity of the original research remains intact.

As a resident of Picuris Pueblo, contributor Mermejo actually worked with Dick during the excavations of the 1960s. His contributions on the value of archaeology to Native Americans are especially insightful. Mermejo's caveat to scholars that they also must learn from indigenous peoples about the humanity of a place is a reminder to those trying to recreate the past that history is more often than not woven from threads of evidence.

This is a well-organized book, which will appeal both to scholars and those with a general historical interest in the Pueblo culture. Scholars interested in pursuing more investigative work in the murals found at Picuris, for example (the book contains the first information ever published on these) will find it easy to do. The research is well documented. Adler's easily flowing narrative style, plus the illustrations, charts and other data add greatly to the story of Picuris pueblo. The explanation of the

changes in archaeological research over the past 30 years also give the book a unique flavor.

----Sara Ford

My Land Sings: Stories from the Rio Grande by Rudolfo Anaya. Illustrated by Amy Cordova. Morrow Junior Books, New York 1999, 144 pages. (For ages 9-12) Cloth, \$17.00

This book includes many ties to New Mexico, especially regarding the creators. Well-known author Rudolfo Anaya has justly received a reputation for preserving and sharing his native Hispanic culture with others. In this book, the author remains true to form by offering nine stories.

Illustrator Amy Cordova, a member of a Taos family, currently lives in Mora. She has illustrated other books--*Face of an Angel* by Denise Chavez, *My Night Forest* by Ron Owen and her own book, *Abuelita's Heart*. Like Anaya, she also shares her own culture through her visual renderings of the stories in this book.

In the introduction, Anaya shares his analysis of storytelling. Some of the stories in this book stem from a family tradition of sharing stories and others include his original rendering. For example, the story "Lupe and la Llorona" illustrates bravery in the face of fear. Several stories deal with the importance of obedience—"Dulcinea," "Dona Sebastiana," and "Sipa's Choice." Still others deal with the moral of living righteously. "The Three Brothers," "The Lost Camel" and "The Miller's Good Luck" all fit this category.

This fast and easy read, includes thought-provoking lessons, which benefit us all. Anaya transcends culture, even though he shares his own ethnic background in the writing. If one has a free afternoon and wants an enjoyable way to spend the time, then this book is perfect. However, if one's busy schedule doesn't permit such a block of time for reading, have no fear. One may read a story at a time, as time permits.

----Kathy Cordova

La Musica de los Viejitos: Hispano Folk Music of the Rio Grande del Norte by Jack Loeffler, Katherine Loeffler and Enrique Lamadrid. University of New Mexico Press, Albuquerque, 1999. Photos, illustrations, 223 pages. Paper, \$19.95. 3-CD set \$45.00

Those of us who are involved in the preservation and history of Hispanic culture have long anticipated the release of this wonderful work. Kudos and more kudos to Jack Loeffler for the outstanding labor of love on the music which has survived for centuries in New Mexico. This book reads like a Hall of Fame of the tradition bearers who have preserved the traditional Hispanic music of New Mexico.

Loeffler and team not only document examples of the songs but also annotate the musical scores and through diagrams explain the various folk dances. The book, filled with *romances*, *trovos*, *décimas*, *inditas*, *corridos* and *canciones* as well as ceremonial, religious and dance music, is a showcase of New Mexican traditions.

Not only do the Loefflers and Lamadrid continue the work begun by such great authors as Aurelio and Manuel Espinoza, Arturo Campa, Ruben Cobos, John D. Robb and others too numerous to mention, they also include the *nueva canción*, the new songs being developed by the likes of ethnomusicologist Cipriano Vigil. The outstanding photography of Jack Parsons also documents the well-known musicians of New Mexico. The book should be required reading for all students of New Mexico and Southwest Studies as well as anyone wanting to learn and understand more about Hispanic culture.

The book comes with 3 CDs, which enable the reader to hear the music in this masterpiece by the original artists. What a treat! The people of Taos should be pleasantly surprised to see how many of their neighbors are included in this work.

After 4,000-plus interviews, there is still much research to be done regarding music and tradition bearers. Loeffler has begun a work, which should continue, for there are many more heroes of this music in our rural areas. La musica de los viejitos is also the musica of all of us. The youth should be

motivated to preserve these beautiful musical and dance traditions. I highly recommend this book.

-----Arsenio Cordova

Rio del Norte: People of the Upper Rio Grande from Earliest Times to the Pueblo Revolt by Carroll L. Riley. University of Utah Press, Salt Lake City, 1995. Bibliographic references, index, maps, photos and illustrations, 345. Cloth, \$29.95.

Here is the reference for which many of us have been looking. Interesting and readable, but also comprehensive and up to date, this book brings us the story of the great pueblo cultures that developed over the last 11,000 years of human activity in the Southwest and how they were changed during the European occupation of the upper Rio Grande region.

The author, Carroll L. Riley, resides in Las Vegas, New Mexico and is a distinguished professor emeritus of anthropology at Southern Illinois University and is currently a research associate at the Laboratory of Anthropology, Museum of New Mexico, and an adjunct professor at New Mexico Highlands University. As an anthropologist, he brings us the story of the cultural changes affecting the Pueblo settlers and their nomadic neighbors and sometime enemies, the Querechos and Teyajumanos, as they attempted to maintain their cultural integrity while meeting and reacting to Europeans. Riley brings us an engaging as well as scholarly history of the vast region stretching from the Bering Straits to the highlands of Mexico.

To the extent possible, Riley presents discussions of differing views of historical writings. In this way, he is able to deal with some of the ethnic chauvinism that colors accounts of Pueblo and Spanish history. He also poses questions regarding differing theories and points of view about archaeological findings, linguistic groupings, laboratory studies and the other evidence used in studying the people involved. The blurb on the book cover quotes Tony Hillerman, "A must for anyone who wonders what civilization might have become in the Southwest had Europeans not intruded."

----Andy Lindquist

Time Capsules



Peace Corps Volunteers Now in Taos

A contingent of 42 Peace Corps trainees arrived in Taos Monday, the first group in more than a month to come here. They will be here for about 30 days studying community development before leaving for 18 month assignments in Colombia.

The Taos News, January 9, 1964

Importante Carrera de Caballos en Velarde, N.M.

Una importante carrera de caballos tomará lugar en la pequeña población de Velarde, N.M., el próximo viernes primero de abril entre el Apache Boy del Sr. Antonio Romero de esta, y el caballo Blanco Güero del Sr. Miguel Herrera de Pojoaque, N.M.

La carrera fué contratada y arreglada la semana pasada con una apuesta de 150 pesos por cada lado y la carrera será de 675 yardas, bajo las condiciones que solamente que muera algun los dos corceles no se correrá....

Nosotros vamos por el Apache.

La Revista de Taos, 18 de Marzo 1910



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

TO: