

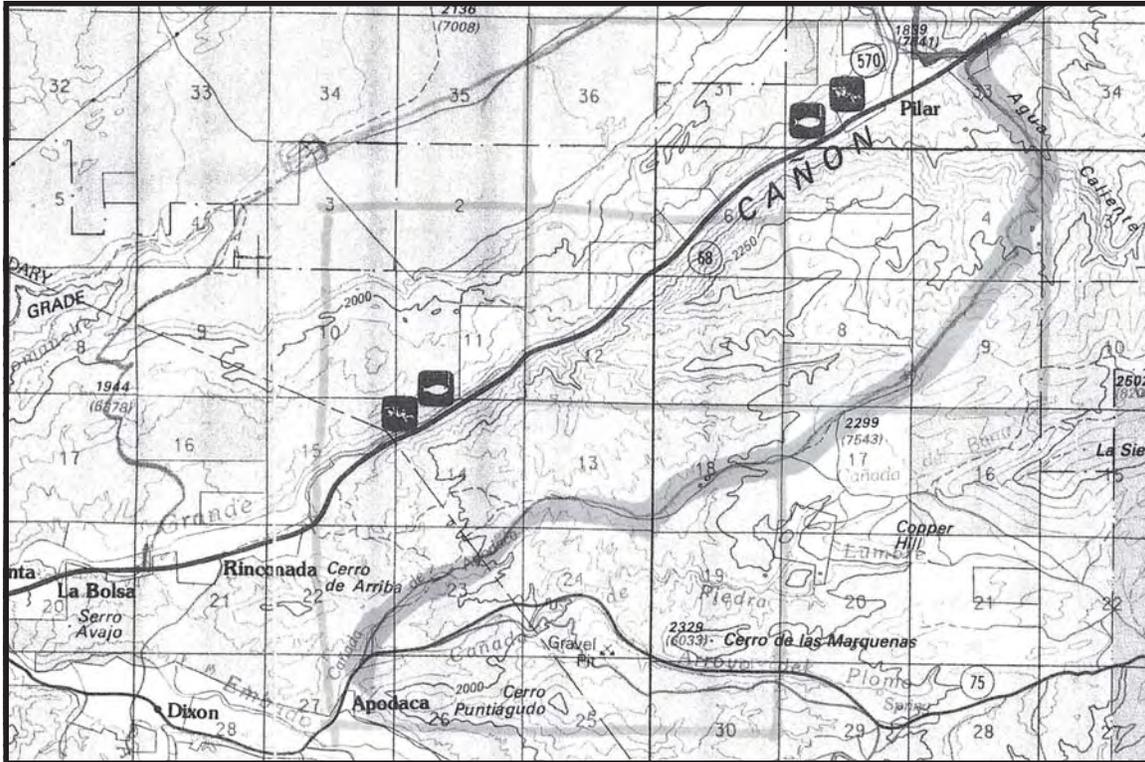
# AYER Y HOY en TAOS

Yesterday and Today in Taos County and Northern New Mexico

Fall 2016

Issue #41

## Taos' Pioneering Historian: Helen Greene Blumenschein & The Apodaca Trail by Patricia Joy Richmond



**Kit Carson**  
**New Mexico**  
**Soldier**

by  
**Marc Simmons**



**"Brett"**



1924 Courtesy Yale University Archive

A publication of the Taos County Historical Society

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Taos County Historical Society's publication, Ayer y Hoy en Taos - 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 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 distributed to all members of the Taos County Historical Society as a benefit of membership.

### Editor

Dave Cordova

The Taos County Historical Society is a New Mexico non-profit organization dedicated to the study and preservation of the historical resources of Taos County and Northern New Mexico. Membership is open to any interested person, regardless of residence.

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## A Message from the TCHS President

Dear Members,

Another year has come and gone... and here we are, proud that our organization has increased in membership. I am, personally, proud of our board members who continue to work very hard in everything they do. We are so blessed to have a hard working Board and a team of volunteers who devote many hours of their time, unpaid, to our organization. Even though we are a small group, I know that we are making a big difference in Taos County.



To you, our members, thank you for your support in achieving these goals.

It is important that we preserve the past so that our future generations will know our great history and be proud of their historical inheritance.

Some of the Taos County Historical Society's (TCHS) accomplishments this past year are the preservation of the Duran Molino, 'thank you' to Charles "Corky" Hawk for his many hours of dedication. Thanks to the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) and the Healy Foundation for awarding the TCHS grant money to make it possible. In July, we traveled back in time with a field trip to the D H Lawrence Ranch. It was interesting to look into the time era of D.H. and Frieda Lawrence, The Brett and Mabel Dodge Luhan. The August lecture by Karen Cordova focused on rural life in Northern New Mexico and Southern Colorado. September's lecture by Michael Knight focused on "Helene Wurlitzer in Taos" and the Wurlitzer Foundation's influence and impact of a visionary patron of the arts in Taos.

The November lecture with Dr. Joyce Appleby, History Emeritus at UCLA, presented "The Past and History: Reflections on Their Differences". The December Christmas Luncheon will feature Larry Torres, UNM Professor & Historian speaking about "Christmas Customs in Northern New Mexico"

We are very fortunate that many of the people who are moving to Taos are very interested in our rich history. Our lectures have increased in attendance and with that has increased our membership rolls. We welcome everyone who wants to join our organization and encourage you to visit our website.

[www.taoscountyhistoricalsociety.org](http://www.taoscountyhistoricalsociety.org).

The Future of the Society in 2017: "Looking forward to opening our history museum on the second floor of the Old Taos County Courthouse."

I would like to thank you for your support and wish you all the best for the festive season and the coming year. Please continue to be an active participant in our mission to "To record and preserve the Irreplaceable." Wishing you and yours the happiest of holidays and all the best in 2017!

Ernestina Cordova, President  
Taos County Historical Society

# Taos' Pioneering Historian: Helen Greene Blumenschein & The Apodaca Trail

by Patricia Joy Richmond

## Preface

Although not a New Mexico native<sup>2</sup>, Helen Greene Blumenschein (1909-1989) acquired extensive first-hand knowledge of the Taos Valley and adjacent mountains throughout her long life. Since childhood, she had roamed the Taos countryside freely, first afoot or by burro and later on horseback. As daughter of renowned artists Ernest L. Blumenschein and Mary Greene Blumenschein, Helen's primary path proceeded toward her own career as an artist; but her inquisitive mind reached beyond subjects pertinent to her artistic talents. Relying on her comprehensive readings of primary and secondary source materials as well as her in-field research, Helen became familiar with New Mexico's archaeological, cultural, and historic heritage. In 1952, Helen Blumenschein, Corina Santistevan (1919-2016), Jack Boyer (1911-1989), and other Taos Valley associates dedicated to preserving local history organized the Taos County Historical Society (TCHS). Helen served as the society's first president and as editor of the TCHS newsletter from 1956 to 1960. She also chaired the society's Historic Sites Committee. As demonstrated by newsletters, letters to editors, personal letters, journal articles, self-published books, lectures, and radio broadcasts, Helen Blumenschein willingly shared her insights, knowledge, and research with anyone who held an interest in Taos Valley's pre-historic and historic legacies.<sup>3</sup>



Helen Blumenschein nurtured a special passion for Taos Valley's pre-Spanish cultural heritage. As a charter member of the Taos Archaeology Society, she enrolled in a ten-week archaeology course taught by Dr. Bertha Dutton, Director of the Museum of Navajo Ceremonial Art in Santa Fe. Working in the field under the supervision of archaeologists Fred Wendorf, Stanley Stubbs, and Stewart Peckham and with the approval of the private property owners, Helen excavated early Puebloan sites within Taos Valley.<sup>4</sup> Though an amateur, as were most who shed light on northern New Mexico's archaeological sites prior to the 1970s, she documented her work and published articles in *El Palacio*. To develop public awareness aimed toward preservation and protection of cultural sites, she launched a series of informative radio broadcasts.<sup>5</sup> Some of her radio lectures, still available in print or on cassette tape, demonstrate not only her personal knowledge and skills but also her commitment to professional ethical standards.<sup>6</sup> In recognition of her many contributions toward northern New Mexico's archaeological record, the Archaeological Society of New Mexico honored Helen for her Taos Valley work with an Achievement Award in 1969. The Society honored her again by dedicating Volume 5 of its *Collected Papers* (1980) in *Honor of Helen Greene Blumenschein*. In recognizing Helen as a *dedicated and long-time member who has devoted much of her energy to a variety of undertakings in the Taos locale, primarily in pursuit of her interest in art, archaeology, trails and history*, Albert H. Schroeder (National Parks Service, Santa Fe) acknowledged that Helen's *early work on prehistoric sites in that area served to draw the attention of professionals to further investigate the cultural remains of the region*.

Helen's deep interest in both pre-history and history set a foundation for professional archaeologists and historians who subsequently have followed her lead. Helen Blumenschein's dedication to identifying the route used by Governor General Don Diego de Vargas to visit Taos Pueblo in 1692, and again in 1694 and 1696, pioneered the exploration of ancient trails and old roads within the Taos Valley. She documented and shared her findings through journal entries, published works, TCHS newsletters, and on maps – commercial and hand-drawn. Some of Helen's investigative research and in-field work remains available through archival files in Albuquerque, Santa Fe, and Taos or through her self-published booklets.<sup>7</sup>

## Helen's arrival in Taos Valley

At age four, Helen made her first trip to Taos Valley by train with her mother, Mary Greene Blumenschein.<sup>8</sup> The Blumenschein family maintained a residential home in New York City – Helen's birthplace. However, Ernest spent his summers painting in Taos. In June 1913, he managed to encourage wife Mary to make the long journey west for a family reunion. Departing from the *Chili Line's* Barranca Station on the west rim of the Rio Grande Gorge, mother and daughter boarded a six-passenger surrey with four horses. The surrey descended one thousand feet to a bridge across the Rio Grande del Norte and then climbed the steep Pilar Hill to reach the historic plaza on the Taos Plain – a twenty-five mile ride over a rocky dirt road.<sup>9</sup>

Helen had spent her formative years under the watchful eye of her Grandmother Greene.<sup>10</sup> In 1919, Mary Blumenschein brought Helen to Taos to live permanently. This time, mother and daughter rode the train to Raton, New Mexico, where Ernest met his family with a new Model T Ford. In bucking mud to the hubcaps en route to Taos, the car broke an axle in the Moreno Valley.<sup>11</sup> Rain poured all day. Mary stayed in the car, but Ernest and young Helen went for a walk. Helen recalled that her father gave his young daughter a lesson in *evolution* when they discovered some tadpoles in a pool of water. A passing blacksmith took the broken axle to his shop for repairs and returned with it by sundown. That night, the Blumenscheins camped in a tent at the foot of Paloflechado Pass. By morning, water streamed through the tent. Although a frail child, Helen repeatedly held a rock against the rear wheel as her mother pushed on the Model T to help mount the steep pass. Despite being muddy, weary, and sore from her travel adventures, young Helen marveled, *as forever more, speechless before the beauty of the Taos Mountain, changing constantly as the June showers brushed its sides*.<sup>12</sup>

Once settled into the Blumenscheins' studio home on Ledoux Street, Helen became acquainted not only with people living in and around the plaza but also Ernest Blumenschein's friends at Taos Pueblo.<sup>13</sup> The protected child of an East Coast aristocratic culture became an inquisitive vagabond free to explore intriguing arroyos, hills, and mountains surrounding her new home. Northern New Mexico's landscapes and the Native and Spanish cultural traditions stirred her passions for beauty as well as her quest for knowledge. What Helen could not learn from firsthand sources, she acquired through reading. Her formal academic education<sup>14</sup> expanded with personally acquired books as well as those borrowed from libraries. As had her parents, Helen spent time in Paris pursuing her studies in art. She also resided in New York City – studying and exploring artistic techniques.

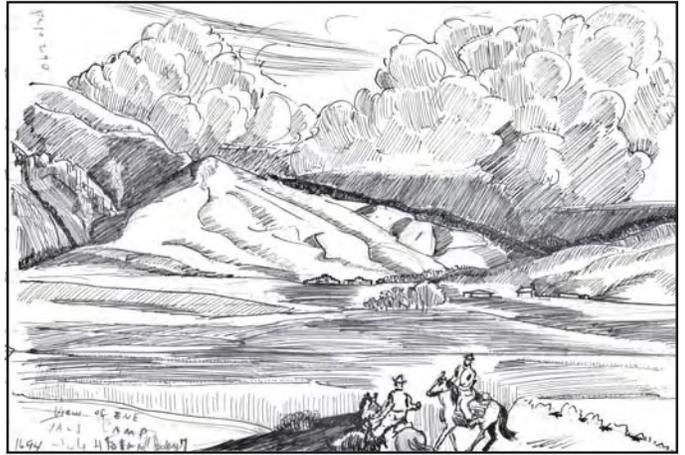
## Don Diego deVargas' *entradas* into Taos Valley<sup>15</sup>

Helen Blumenschein first became acquainted with Don Diego deVargas' 1692 *entrada* into Taos Valley in 1938 when she read a translation of his journal at the New York City Public Library. However, her interest in Vargas and his route would not peak for a couple of decades. During the 1940s and early 1950s, Helen's life focused on a variety of activities outside the realms of Taos Valley's archaeology and history. During World War II, she volunteered for the *Women's Army Auxiliary Corps* (WAAC).<sup>16</sup> Acquiring the rank of First Lieutenant, she served in several assignments within the states before being sent to the South Pacific to censor mail written in English or Spanish. While stationed in the Philippines, Helen attempted to determine the fate of Taos men who had endured the Bataan Death March.<sup>17</sup>

Upon returning to Taos, Helen expanded her artistic repertoire - block prints of Taos Valley scenes, charcoal portraits of Taos women, men, and children, pen and ink sketches, oils and watercolor paintings that captured landscapes and cultural activities. However, after her mother's death, much of Helen's time became dedicated to her aging father. She resided in Albuquerque for a while to attend to Ernest Blumenschein's needs until his death in 1960.

Historic maps depicting early pueblos and Spanish settlements fascinated Helen. Relying on Vargas' journal and other archival materials, in 1964 she began retracing Vargas' 1692 route from Santa Fe to Taos.<sup>18</sup> During this time, Helen's friend Peggy Pond Church<sup>19</sup> happened to meet Del Norte, Colorado, historian Ruth Marie Colville. Pond learned that Colville had been working on Vargas' 1694 *entrada* from Taos Pueblo into southern Colorado's San Luis Valley.<sup>20</sup> Pond decided the two historians should meet to discuss their investigative endeavors.

Helen's and Colville's shared interests in Don Diego deVargas developed into a friendship that spanned decades.<sup>21</sup> Although Helen died before compiling her work into a finished manuscript, Colville proceeded with the project - first becoming familiar with Vargas' northern New Mexico trail as identified by Helen's research and then personally exploring and confirming the segments that linked Vargas' route from Taos northward to the 1694 fording place of the Rio Grande and his returning trip through Ojo Caliente. Colville's *La Vereda: a Trail through Time* (1992) melds her years of research with Helen's pioneering trail work in northern New Mexico.



Vargas at Taos Pueblo, 1694, Helen Greene Blumenschein pen and ink print, HGB, Aranzazu, I: 290, Southwest Research Center, Taos.

### *Description of Trail and Roads from Velarde to Embudo to Taos*<sup>22</sup>

On a snowy day, while enjoying the warmth of her adobe fireplace, Helen Blumenschein compiled some of her Apodaca Trail in-field research experiences into a descriptive narration:<sup>23</sup>

*When it was first brought to my attention by Jack Boyer<sup>24</sup> that the dramatic ride we take today on the paved highway #64 [SH 68] from Velarde through the Rio Grande Gorge to Pilar had only been in existence since 1875, I realized that a fascinating story and a walk on an old abandoned road was in store for me. The original road served Taos Valley since prehistoric Indian days when the Picuris Indians and Pot Creek Indians would trade - or fight.<sup>25</sup>*

*In 1938, I had come across several old maps in the New York City Library, [each] showing the same route from Santa Fe to Taos. When I started reading firsthand accounts of the early travelers on the road from Velarde to Taos, beginning with Alvarado in 1540,<sup>26</sup> Vargas 1692,<sup>27</sup> Colonel Sterling Price's Military reports of 1847 and 1853,<sup>28</sup> and the book by the first territorial attorney, W.W.H. Davis<sup>29</sup>, to remembering my own arrival by train and stagecoach in 1913, I suddenly was aware of the overly rapid changes in recent years of the beautiful, isolated valley of the TAOSSES (as the Taos Indians were called on one old map). I felt compelled to ride and walk this lifeline to [Taos] valley...*

*It was in this arid land that I began my walk, directly east of Velarde, one Sunday morning in July 1964. I would not have known which of a multitude of arroyos to choose had it not been for a Spanish American guide who was also interested in history, Mr. Emilio Martinez.<sup>30</sup>*

*We went through fences, tin can dumps, and the Arroyo de los Entrañas (branched purple cacti - and the arroyo is full of them)<sup>31</sup>. Going due east and then turning up another gully northeast until we reached the crest of Embudo Pass about 1500 feet above the Rio Grande and three miles away. There a beautiful view to the northeast of the Picuris Mountains with more erosion in the foreground, so deep that not even a piñon tree could grow on the steep striated folds of the land.<sup>32</sup>*

*To the north and directly above the pass is the high Black Mesa capped with rich purplish basalt rocks, the soft pink sand underneath dotted with tumbling rocks and piñon trees. Heavy cumulus clouds were gathering rapidly against the intense blue of our New Mexico sky, a forerunner of a real cloudburst, which that day was to cut still further (by two feet) the dry riverbed of the purple cacti.*

*I was shown a cow path heading down the very steep arroyo on the north side and told there was a spring beyond. It was too hot and sultry to continue any further that day, so instead we examined the stakes for a natural gas line going right over the pass and wondered about a cross of stones lying horizontally on the ground just 100 yards west of the pass. Who had died here and when and why? Just a few obsidian chips were found on the surface. I picked up three different sizes of horseshoes and had fun speculating on whose horse or mule it had belonged to - Fray Zamora [Francisco de Zamora] on his way to Taos in 1598? Alvarado and his soldiers in 1540? Vargas and his military expeditions of 1692-1694-1696? Vargas even mentioned the embudo cutoff as he called the pass.*

*Bishop Tameron, checking on his missions to the north in 1760, returned to Santa Fe this way. Another priest, Dominguez in 1776, worrying about his flock, spoke of it [the trail], [and] Anza on his return from killing the scourge of the southwest, the Comanche chief Cuerno Verde and his council, in southern Colorado. W.W. Davis, the young first attorney for the new territory in the U.S. in 1853, used it in his circuit horseback trip to Taos on a blustery March day. He did not arrive until 9 p.m. - cold and tired. Bandelier in 1892 preferred to return by the wagon road from Taos so that he could see the magnificent range of the Sangre de Cristo with its alpine Truchas peaks.*

*Making a drawing from this pass, I wondered what other stories from the past would entice me to walk still further!*

The next week I walked to the Embudo Pass from the Dixon side – only an hour’s walk from the highway up a narrow arroyo with a bare trickle of water from that spring I had been told about. The sides of the arroyo became steeper and steeper.

I followed a cow path made since the cloudburst of a week ago and found even the cows had to reroute their own way around the erosion. The last 100 yards were forbidding and shocking to me as I gazed into the gullies 15 feet deep which had torn through the ruts of the wagon wheels of a century and a half ago. No wonder Colonel Sterling Price in 1847 had to send his artillery “by a more southern route.” His 180 men on foot, who had come this shorter way, were attacked by 500-700 Indians who tried desperately to stop the tide of people coming into Taos Valley. For over 50 years, Spanish and Mexican colonists had been pouring in. Now an entirely new people were trapping and hunting in their [Pueblos’] domain. The Indians had seen thousands of prairie schooners crossing the Great Plains on the Santa Fe Trail (1820-1880). Now, here was their army in mid-winter - 480 of them, plowing through two feet of snow over the Picurís Mountain, hauling their cannon, to revenge the murder of Governor Bent in Taos, January 18, 1847.

I couldn’t help but look for arrowheads again – all those arrows against all those guns! I found many broken ones even after all these years! W.W. Davis in 1853 spoke of a natural column of sandstone at the beginning of the “bridle path to Taos” as he called it! Apodaca Canyon – [the column] is still there at the foot of a brand new paved road to Peñasco. [1964]<sup>33</sup>

Another week [Orval Shreeves] and I drove from Embudo – now Dixon - east for eight miles up a one-way dirt road to Ojo Sarco. Beautiful sandstone formations were all about us. We dropped into an arroyo bed, turned a right angle to the south for a quarter of a mile and then east again up a straight steep hill when behold, we were in the narrow fertile valley of Ojo Sarco. Looking back and west, we saw the ever present Abiquiu mesa or Pedernal. In front of us to the east was the Jicarilla Peak, a bare inverted basket-shaped peak – one of the sacred mountains of the Picurís Indians.

The road ascended gradually for four miles until it struck the paved road #75 running north and south from Peñasco to Truchas. We turned north driving through pine forests several miles and arrived in another fertile valley and the town of Las Trampas. The license for building its church was granted by Bishop Tamaron in 1760 when he stopped by on horseback. We continued past an old hollowed log flume which crosses a dry arroyo to take irrigation water to the fields beyond. The road continued up and down numerous pine ridges to Chamizal, still another long narrow fertile valley. A few miles further and we [arrived] at the Picurís Pueblo, an overnight stop for the early travelers when the Picurís Indians were peaceful. Today, 1964, it is bustling with the activity of the archaeologists under Dr. Dick,<sup>34</sup> who has been allowed to dig in the pueblo itself. (In 1692 [Picurís] was as big as the Taos Pueblo – its lingual offshoot. Today it only has twenty families.)

From there, still by car, I went east following the Picurís River, now the Pueblo River, three miles to a sign pointing north to the Picurís Forest Fire Lookout – up the Telephone Canyon to the Picurís Saddle, through high mountain meadows and pine forest for nine miles. At the crest, a brand new fence of the Forest Service south boundary of the Carson Forest turns out to be the east boundary of the Serna grant given in 1724 to the ten families living in the Ranchos Valley.

This boundary was the road of the early travelers. Now, on foot we must go from the crest, down and up another small ridge, through two beautiful meadows. One is in the upper Miranda Canyon<sup>35</sup> just six miles from Talpa and the Ponce de Leon Hot Springs. (Were these called that after Don Diego de Vargas Zapata y Luhan Ponce de Leon?)

The canyon ends, or it runs into the Ranchos River. [The] area [was] covered with an acre of tin cans! What an anticlimax to this beautiful view of Taos Valley. A high range of mountains surrounds it on three sides with four rivers crossing it and making it fertile [for] the little villages of Llano Quemado - Talpa, Rio Chiquito, Ranchos de Taos and its magnificent adobe mission church of St. Francis of Assisi (HGB footnote: October 4 fiesta and arrival of Vargas October 5.)

Further west down this valley [lie] the hamlets of Cordillera – the former walled fortress town of Los Cordovas.<sup>36</sup> Then following the Pueblo River through Ranchitos, lower and upper, to Fernando de Taos located on a ridge above an Indian Spring, the road continues on to Colorado...through Placita, El Prado, Arroyo Hondo, Questa, Costilla [and onto] La Veta Pass. The names of the towns speak for the cultures which remain today.

Taos Pueblo, just two miles northeast of town is much the same as when Fray Zamora came to live in it in 1598. Later the Spanish colonists lived on the outside of the west wall for many years until they were given permission by the Taos Indians to settle on Indian land at the present location of the Taos Plaza above the old spring.

Today is the middle of November, the peaks have their snow caps and the wind is cold, so I shall curl up by my Indian fireplace for the winter and read some more personal accounts of these early travelers into the Valle de Taos.

Helen G. Blumenschein, Nov. 11, 1964 Nambé!! (corrected Nov. 30)[HGB]<sup>3737</sup>



Los Cordovas on the Rio Pueblo, Helen Greene Blumenschein pen and ink print, HGB, Aranzazu, I: 95, Southwest Research Center, Taos.

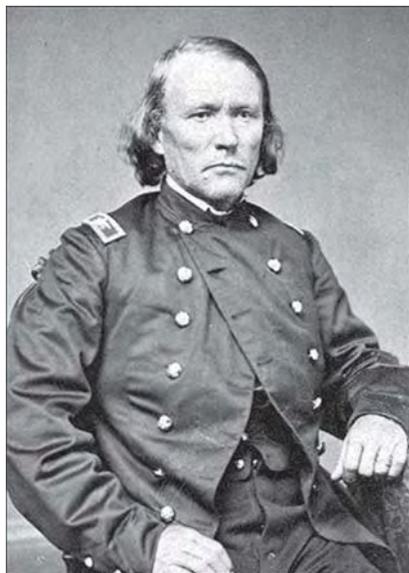
Patricia Joy Richmond, a San Luis Valley historian the author of *Trail to Disaster: the Route of John C. Frémont’s 4<sup>th</sup> Expedition* and *The Story of La Loma de San Jose*. She is a founding member of the Old Spanish Trail Association [OSTA]. Richmond also was a founding member of the San Luis Valley Historical Society and served as editor of the *San Luis Valley Historian*. She and Helen Blumenschein shared a long friendship that began with their interests in northern New Mexico history. Richmond has written articles for *Ayer y Hoy*, *Spanish Traces*, and other Southwest historical publications.

Patricia Joy Richmond’s information rich End Notes will be published in total in the *Ayer Y Hoy* Issue on the website.  
[www.taoscountyhistoricalsociety.org](http://www.taoscountyhistoricalsociety.org)

Reproductions of Helen Blumenschein’s drawing are used here by permission from Shirley Davis, heir of the Helen Greene Blumenschein Estate.

# Kit Carson, New Mexico Soldier

by Marc Simmons



A name that continues to loom large in the history of New Mexico is that of Kit Carson, perhaps the most famous westerner of his day. His career as a mountain man, guide, transcontinental mail courier, Indian agent, and military officer has become the stuff of legend. Not a bad outcome for a pioneer boy who never went to school.

After his trapping days were over, Carson settled in Taos, marrying the beautiful Josefa Jaramillo in 1843. Ten years later, he became Indian agent for the Utes and Apaches with his adobe residence two blocks from the plaza serving as agency headquarters. That building today is the Kit Carson Museum.

When the Civil War broke out, Kit received a commission as colonel of the First Regiment of New Mexico Volunteers. He obtained that position based solely on his previous fighting experience, since he had no formal military training.

Kit recruited his regiment from the towns and farms of northern New Mexico. Late in 1861 he moved his men down to Albuquerque where they engaged in training for several weeks. Capt. Rafael Chacón says that Kit brought his wife and children down from Taos where they had an enjoyable time, until January when the regiment was sent south to defend Ft. Craig threatened by a Confederate invasion from Texas.

What followed was the first major battle of the Civil War in the territory. Bloody Valverde was fought on the east bank of the Rio Grande several miles above the fort in central New Mexico, on February 21, 1862.

As it happened, Kit's hastily trained regiment of Hispano farmers and shopkeepers ended up in the center of the Union line. They faced repeated Texan cavalry charges and never wavered. Chacón remembered later that Col. Carson had stalked the lines amid a swarm of bullets and cannon balls calling out: "Firme, muchachos, firme," that is, "Stand firm, boys."

When the Union commander ordered a retreat, Kit's gallant regiment was still fighting furiously, and even pressing forward. His men were the last Federal troops to leave the field. In his own official report, Carson stated un-dramatically: "I received the order to withdraw and re-cross the river. The movement was executed in good order."

Afterward, when the main Union force followed the Confederates toward Albuquerque, Col. Carson remained as temporary commander of Fort Craig. One day he rode up to Socorro to visit some of the wounded rebels left behind.

One of them recorded that they were awed by Kit, a man the Texans loved, even while dreading him because of his "big reputation as a soldier."

Major Edward Wynkoop, who served in New Mexico, said in his memoirs that "Carson knew how to lead men into battle and keep them there." As a result of his performance at Valverde, Kit was promoted to brevet brigadier-general of volunteers. It is claimed that he was the only man in the country ever to attain a general's rank who was illiterate.

That deficiency may have played a part in an amusing incident that occurred at Santa Fe in 1866, the year after the war. In the capital on official business, Gen. Carson had to share a room at Ft. Marcy with visiting New York artist Worthington Whitredge, who tells the tale.

A formal military ball was scheduled and Kit became highly agitated, being unable to read the manual that described proper dress. Too embarrassed to ask other officers, he inquired of his roommate.

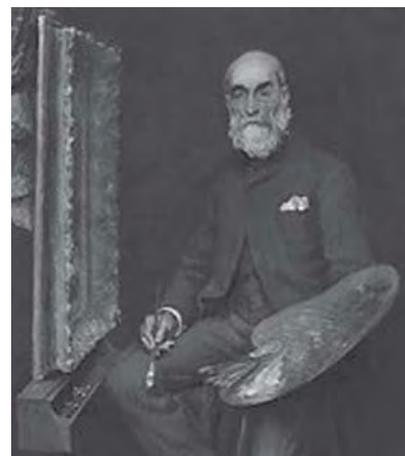
According to Whitredge, Carson said he'd heard that pumps were correct at a ball, but he didn't know what pumps were. "I told him pumps were a low shoe," replied the artist, "but no officer would wear them and he must go in his boots."

Still uncertain and worried, Kit went shopping, only to learn no pumps could be had in Santa Fe. He did find a pair of ladies slippers that fit, so he bought them at a high price.

That evening he attended the ball in his boots, but carried the slippers hidden in his coat, in case he found it necessary to make a quick change.

At first glance Whitredge was unable to see where the slippers had been stashed in the tight uniform. But upon closer inspection, he observed one buttoned on each side of the General's chest, so that, as he put it, "his figure was not unlike that of the handsome señoritas whirling in the waltz."

Poor Kit: a perfect lion in battle, but uninformed and painfully ill-at-ease in polite society!



Artist Worthington Whitredge

# “Los Matachines”

By Oclides Quintana Tenorio

The “*Los Matachines*” is a dramatic dance that is celebrated during the Christmas Holiday season in many of the Indian pueblos and in some Hispanic communities. The origins are more Spanish than Indian, originating in Spain during the 16th Century, when a drama was written about the conversion of the Moors to Christianity. The central theme of the drama was of a Moor, that after seeing the fervor of the Spanish in defense of their faith, converted to Catholicism.



*La Malinche amid the Matachines Dancers*

Like the “*Los Pastores*” and “*Las Posadas*,” *Los Matachines* is an allegorical drama of morality that represents the conflict between good and evil. As in other moral dramas, good triumphs over evil in the end.

A century later, during the time of the Conquistadors in the New World, the missionaries made a great effort to convert the indigenous native population by the performance of the moral drama. The effort failed, due to the natives’ inability to understand or speak the Spanish language, so the missionaries transformed the drama to a dance without dialogue.

The Aztecs accepted the dance but changed the costumes and the types of dances to their style of dress and dance. *Moctezuma*, the king of the Aztecs, represented the Moor. They added a character, the role of *La Malinche*, the only female who is representative of the Virgin Mary, the wife of *Moctezuma*, the wife of Hernan Cortés or, even, the daughter of *Moctezuma*. A young girl dressed in white takes the role of *La Malinche* and represents all the good, cleanliness and purity. The guide, *El Monarca*, wears a crown with a cross. A man or young boy takes the role of a bull with horns. This character represents evil.

From 10 to 14 *Matachines* Dancers stand in two parallel lines. *El Monarca*, the leader of the dance, dances between the lines with a very complex style of dance with *La Malinche* following *El Monarca*.

The music for the dance is usually provided by one or more guitars and violins. The violinist and guitarist play their instruments non stop. Outside of the lines, a pair of clowns attack the bull with their whips. At times, the clowns may go after and attack the people in the audience watching the dance.



*A Clown, the Bull and El Monarca in white*

Good finally triumphs over evil with the arrival of Cortés, the Christian, and conquers *Moctezuma*, the pagan. The end of the dance comes when the bull with horns falls dead and all the *Matachines* Dancers kneel.



## “Mis Crismes”

By Dave Cordova

The Christmas season always conjures many good memories of family, foods and treats, gift giving and especially receiving gifts. And to have been lucky enough to have been born and raised in Taos.

Being a child in the early sixties meant that our toys were wind-up and did not require batteries or charging. The gifts were also much simpler, consisting of wearables, hand-crafted items, something for a sweet tooth and, on occasion, highly sought after fashion items like shoes and coats.

Christmas Eves were very special at our house. Usually our grandparents would spend the night, meaning they wanted to sleep while the children were just too excited to even think about sleep and would, consequently, keep the elders awake much longer than they preferred. But sleep we did after losing the battle to stay awake. Awakening a few short hours later and before breakfast, the family would gather to open their Christmas presents. I wondered why the adults even wanted to see the children opening gifts, especially since they, themselves, received such mundane gifts. But every year the adults gathered around the Christmas tree with the kids and cheered on the one opening a present. The kids were expected to thank the giver and give them a hug or kiss of appreciation. This one custom became my favorite part when I became a giving adult.



I didn’t know it then, but learned it as an adult, that giving a present that made the receiver’s eyes light up was worth a lot more than receiving a gift. It was perhaps a bit self-serving, to get some warm-fuzzies from seeing someone you cared about open a special present from you. Thankfully there have been a lot of children in my family.

Once the presents were all opened and the sumptuous breakfast consumed, it was time for the children to dress warmly to go out into the neighborhood to “*Pider Crismes*,” which was basically asking for Christmas treats. Children wearing new coats and boots and carrying flour sacks went into their neighborhoods shouting, “*Mis Crismes*,” as they approached the houses on their route. Very similar to Trick or Treating, this was done at mid-morning on Christmas day. The treats were simple, consisting of oranges, apples, hard old-fashioned candy, nuts and “*cacahuates*” (peanuts) in a small brown paper bag.

I remember trudging through knee high snow with the goodies in tow, being careful not drop my bag in the snow where it would get wet and make my treats soggy and my hard candy sticky. Once home, sitting at the table in a warm kitchen, I separated the fruit, candy and nuts into different piles my father helped himself to my peanuts and my mother to the fruit, and of course, I shared my goodies with the youngest children who were too young to go out with the other kids.



Although I didn’t know any better then, today I am very grateful to have grown up with such loving family, neighbors and friends. It is said that you cannot go back, but you can hang on to your wonderful memories... they will always remain with you.

# “Brett”

By Judith Nasse

Her family called her “Doll.” Her classmates at the Slade School of Fine Art, London called her “Brett.” Frieda Lawrence called her “The Brett,” which in German refers to “deaf as a piece of wood,” showing Frieda’s disdain of her in the early days. To many Americans she was called “Lady Brett.” She allowed the title “Lady” especially when she needed publicity for her art. However according to British proper address “Lady” could only be a title afforded to her mother. Daughters of Viscounts are always referred to as “The Honorable” so Dorothy was “The Honorable Dorothy Brett.” If one were to address her in person or salutation in a letter, one would simply say, “Miss Brett.” For Taoseños she’s most often fondly referred to as “Brett.”

Why would a British aristocrat, with all the privileges and pomp many young girls dream of, want to go live in a high desert in the American Wild West? In London there were buses and taxis, running water and indoor toilets. In Taos there were very few amenities and very few cars. Brett never learned to ride a horse when she was young in spite of the fact that her father raised race horses. She could barely cook. She’d never really done any manual labor. In Taos she learned to work with her hands by digging acequias with D. H. Lawrence on his ranch, back then known as the “Kiowa Ranch.” Lawrence taught her how to do chores, such as helping him chase Susan the errant cow, chop and haul wood, and renovate the Homesteaders Cabin. Lawrence also taught her to saddle and ride a horse so they could go fetch mail and provisions or take treks into Lobo Mountain. This was in 1924 when she came to Taos with the Lawrences, having arrived via ship, a stay in New York City, and the long train ride out West.

In today’s terms Brett could perhaps be called a bohemian. She was certainly a woman ahead of her time in that she broke many rules to live life on her own artistic terms. And, she did this as an extremely hard-of-hearing person. In later years visitors recall she often had to stop conversations to adjust the electronic hearing-aid box that sputtered and made odd, erratic noises. Before electric hearing machines, she relied on a brass hearing trumpet that she named “Toby,” a constant presence.



Brett with “Toby”  
(Courtesy of Hignett Book)

Brett became deaf at age sixteen when her appendix burst. The doctor from Windsor Castle was called over. In those days, an appendectomy was virtually unheard of, but the doctor put her on the kitchen table and took out her appendix. The resulting high fever probably caused her hearing loss. It took her months to recover. As a result she had to postpone her coming out party in front of Queen Victoria. She didn’t come out until she was twenty before King Edward.

Her hearing loss was naturally a bane in her life as it cut her off from people and annoyed others when she had to get physically too close to hear conversations. She said of Toby, “Do you think I liked it when I saw that brass dipper swallowing up Lorenzo’s (D. H. Lawrence) talk to me? It was worse than Frieda’s restraining influence.”

The hearing loss was also a blessing in that the handicap allowed her to have selective hearing against inane conversations. One can imagine her putting Toby down when Frieda and Lawrence or Mabel Dodge Luhan and Frieda got too argumentative, or when Frieda or Mabel ranted at her.

Deafness was also a great boon for her art. Without her hearing she learned to visually memorize subjects and settings, especially the Pueblo Dances. Her paintings of the dances are so accurate that one day members from the Pueblo came to her door to remind her that she was not allowed to make sketches or take photographs of the ritual

dances. She proved to them that she memorized them. Her method was to memorize the setting, the colors, and the general flow of the dance, then come home and, if needed, have a Pueblo friend pose as a foreground dancer.

Brett became enamored with Native Americans when she was four years old. Her father Viscount Reginald Baliol Brett, Second Viscount of Esher, *éminence grise* (Merriam-Webster: a confidential agent; *especially* : one exercising unsuspected or unofficial power) to Queen Victoria, arranged for a Royal Box for the Queen to see Buffalo Bill’s Wild West Show at Earl’s Court in 1887. Whether Brett was in the Royal Box at the time Queen Victoria attended isn’t certain. What is sure is that she was instantly enamored with the wild Indians in their colorful regalia, especially Chief Sitting Bull. She often recounted that glorious day. Frank Water’s recorded her account to him:

“Whatever her dream or journey...it may have begun with the Yellow Indian.

“She saw him when she was taken by her nursemaid to Buffalo Bill’s Wild West show at the Crystal Palace [sic Earl’s Court Arena]. Trembling with excitement, she watched the doors of the arena open. Out rumbled the stagecoach behind its galloping horses. Then came the pursuing Indians, whooping and yelling, firing their guns, feathers in their warbonnets streaming as they raced around the arena. One of them, bareback on a pinto horse, rode at first sight into her undying memory. Seventy, eighty years later she could still vividly recall his naked, slim body painted bright lemon yellow.”

Dorothy Eugène Brett was born the third child of Viscount Esher and his wife Eleanor Van de Weyes, aka Nellie, on 10 November 1883. Her oldest brother Oliver became the third Viscount of Esher. Her brother Maurice, aka Moll, was his father’s decided favorite child. Her sister Sylvia, aka Syv, married Vyner Brook, who was the last White Rajah of Sarawak. Sylvia wrote a book, *Queen of the Headhunters*, about her life.

Brett’s childhood though colorful in many ways could also be described as sad. The family moved to their home Orchard Lea on the edge of the Windsor Castle grounds when Brett was two as the Queen’s permanent residence was Windsor Castle. The Royals and Bretts had unlimited access to one another’s homes, with a private door for the Queen to enter Orchard Lea. Dorothy and her sister Syv attended dance classes with Princess Beatrice’s daughters in Windsor Castle under the direct eye of Queen Victoria. Later she played the drums in the Castle orchestra, the only



Brett: September 1970 at age 86 (Courtesy of Hignett Book)

instrument she could hear clearly. She cavorted with the royal children and her siblings on the Windsor Castle and Orchard Lea grounds. However, Brett was teased unmercifully by her brothers. Their nanny was mean to the children to the point of clubbing her brother Oliver's pet bullfinch to death, and she never obtained proper schooling. Her mother was in charge of teaching the girls, but attended more to her husband's social duties than to her girls and their studies. The children raised by nannies and servants were rather like strangers in their own home. Brett kept boy's clothes under her bed so that she could run away.

Brett did love the family outings to Roman Camp, their small estate near Callander in the Scottish Highlands. It was there that she became an avid fisher. Until late in life she could often be found fishing in the Rio Grande and tributary rivers and streams around Taos. She brought her creels of each day's catch to give to Taos friends.

It was at Roman Camp in 1910 that her father's friend Sir Ian Hamilton saw her portfolio and persuaded her father to let her apply for the Slade Fine School of Art. She was twenty-seven. Both her father and the Slade were reluctant for her to attend. Up until then she drew, but showed no high interest in art, dreaming instead of becoming an actress. The Slade frowned upon aristocratic girls from attending, viewing it as just a frivolity for them while they looked for husbands. Brett did get into Slade on probation and won many firsts for her art. It was there that she and her circle of friends, including Dora Carrington, cut off their hair and adopted trousers as their mode of dress. They called themselves "Cropheads." Many of them were associated with the Bloomsbury Group; and they had wild escapades in the East End of London with Augustus John.

Brett was naïve, not learning the facts of life until she was thirty; but she had many crushes from her teen years on, including Margaret Brook, Lady Ottoline Morrell, the poet Siegfried Sassoon, and John Middleton Murry with whom she did have an affair. David Farmer in a conversation recounted that in his research on Sassoon, he found Brett had done an excellent pencil portrait of Sassoon. Sadly that, and most of her early paintings and drawings in England, were thrown away by her brother when he went through the family storage after her father died.

Brett's largest crush and deep, abiding friendship, in truth a creative-soul bond, was with D. H. Lawrence. She met him briefly at Garsington, Lady Morell's country home, but came to fully know him when he came back to London from Mexico in 1923. It was at the dinner Lawrence called "The Last Supper" at the Royal Café in London in December 1923 that he called for other artists and writers to join him in Taos to create a utopian society he called "Rananim." Brett probably volunteered because of her crush on Murry, who had said he'd go; but by the time they sailed on the RMS *Aquitania* on 5 March 1924 only Brett was on the ship with Lawrence and Frieda. Murry had moved onto other amorous conquests.

Brett immediately took to life on the Ranch and in Taos, taking to wearing pants, a large sombrero, and a dagger, that frightened some locals, tucked into her boot. She did live on the Ranch for a few months in 1924 in what is now known as the Brett Cabin until Frieda in a state of jealousy banned her from the Ranch except for three days a week. She lived after that in a cabin on Del Monte, the Hawk's ranch just down the road. Brett had to blow a whistle to warn Frieda whenever she was coming up.

When she came back from Italy in 1925, having gone there at Lawrence's invitation during his fatal illness, she took charge of the Ranch at Lawrence's request, keeping it in order and typing a half-dozen manuscripts Lawrence left her to work on. She had earlier sent for a typewriter from England just for this work and continued typing her own unpublished memoirs and letters right up to the end of her own long life.



*Brett at Home Courtesy Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center*

In letters to her from Italy Lawrence hinted at her buying the Ranch as he wanted her to care for it. Never good with money, a constant fight she had with her father who didn't teach her to budget, only admonishing her to live within her allowance, she couldn't afford the Ranch. Plus the Great Depression came on and money so de-valued that she had to scrimp the rest of her life, selling little "potboilers," small oil sketches she sold for \$5.00 each. 1930 was a rough year for Brett as Lawrence, her father, and her second dog named Reggie all died. (Her dogs were named either Baliol or Reggie after her father.)

She did buy a Chevrolet that made it easier to get up and down the mountain. She became an American citizen in 1938. She wintered in town with Mabel Dodge Luhan who introduced her on one of their trips to New York to Alfred Stieglitz and Georgia O'Keefe. Stieglitz gave Brett a show in his gallery.

When Frieda came back from Italy in 1931 with her Italian lover Captain Angelo Ravagli, Brett built her own dwelling on the Del Monte ranch. She called it Tower Beyond Tragedy. It was in 1935 that Ravagli was sent to France to retrieve Lawrence's ashes. The renowned fight between Frieda, Mabel, and Brett as to where the ashes should be placed got quite bumpy. Brett favored scattering them around the favorite trees that Lawrence used to write under. In the end Frieda mixed them in the cement of the Memorial altar.

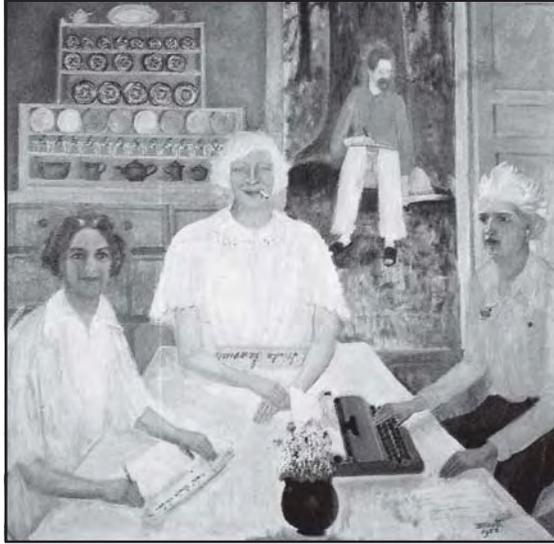
After Lawrence was buried, the three women did forge a friendship between themselves. Frieda even gave Brett the land to build her house and studio in El Prado, which she built in the early 1940's. The house is the large white one just to the right before the Blinking Light on the road to the D. H. Lawrence Ranch and Questa. The house where KTAO is now was the home and gallery of John Manchester who looked after Brett in her later years. He promoted her art from the gallery. Some say he took advantage of her, and perhaps he did; but he also looked after her enough so that she survived his departure from Taos by only a month or so. She died of congestion of the lungs on 27 August 1977 just short of her ninety-fourth birthday.

Brett had another dear friend in Taos, Millicent Rogers. Millicent first came to Taos after her break-up with Clark Gable in 1947. Millicent took to Brett right away inviting Brett and Pueblo artist Trinidad Archuleta to help her paint the walls and vigas in her new home Turtle Walk. Millicent also arranged a show for Brett in New York.



*Brett, Huxley & Gertler at Garsington 1916 Courtesy Hignett book*

After Millicent's untimely death in 1953, Millicent's sons Paul and Arturo Peralta-Ramos continued to look after Brett, even paying for her to attend Queen Elizabeth's Coronation in June 1953, lending her Millicent's tiara. Brett sat in the Royal Box in Westminster Abby. Later Arturo recounted that in 2013 he had a health episode in London and was directed to see a Doctor Brett. It turned out that Dr. Brett was related to Brett, and affirmed the family story that indeed Brett was a child out of wedlock to the Royal Prince and was given to Viscount Esher to raise as his own.



Lawrence's Three Fates 1958 Oil on Canvas

[It is only a guess that the prince was Prince Edward who was renowned for his affairs. Queen Victoria was adamant about keeping family scandals well in the back of the proverbial closet.] So, Brett, a “great-aunt” of Queen Elizabeth, was a princess in her own right. One could say she was regal in living life her own way in her beloved Taos.

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Conversations with David Farmer, Ph.D and Arturo Peralta-Ramos

Judith is a fine artist. Her media are acrylic on canvas, ink on wood miniatures, and illustrations for picture books. She is also a writer of historical novels and the co-author of a biography of Millicent Rogers to be published in June 2012. She writes freelance articles for "Tumbleweeds," a parenting newspaper in Santa Fe.



## “Los Abuelos are the Christmas Ogres”

By Deacon Larry Torres

Every year the season of Advent ushers in the long-awaited time just before Christmas. Straddling the gap between both is an array of special days that begin on the twelfth of December and ends on the sixth of January. In other words, it begins on the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe and it ends on the Feast of the Three Kings. During this time frame, ancient folk plays like *Las Cuatro Apariciones de Guadalupe* and *Los Pastores* and seasonal devotions like *Las Posadas*, and *Los Matachines* may be presented.

This time period especially marks the interval that highlights of the coming of The Christmas Ogres or *Los Abuelos* as they are known in Spanish. *Los Abuelos* are the ancestral spirits of this area that sleep inside in the caves of the local *Sangre de Cristo* Mountains. Once a year they are accorded a singular grace: They may rise from their tombs, pull the cobwebs out of their beards, and return to the land of the living, attracted by the *luminarias* and Christmas *farolitos*.

These Christmas Ogres are the guardians of tradition. They come down to warm their old bones by the fire as they crack their whips and ask if locals remember the ancient ways. They teach their dances to the new generations. To the beat of a drum they dance *La Paloma* and *El Jorundundú*. They also direct the “Dance of the Mute Spirits” or *Los Matachines*. During the dance, they give birth to the new seasonal *abuelito* that will guide them and guard the ancient traditions on the following year. There are now over five hundred such Christmas Ogres that walk these valleys.

Besides their roles as disciplinarians and entertainers, *Los Abuelos* must remind the people of their varied past. They may even ask local children to recite their prayers or to solve cultural riddles. They may offer bowls of *posole* to the audience and watch to see if someone turns down their offer. If they do, it is an indication that they may not be “true-Christians.” This would point them out as descendants of the Crypto-Jews that settled in this area in 1590.

*Los Abuelos* keep order and bless the people as they return to their caves at the end of the season. Locals watch them go back to their year-long sleep with a little sadness and yes, -also with a sigh of relief!

# “Las Luminarias O Farolitos”

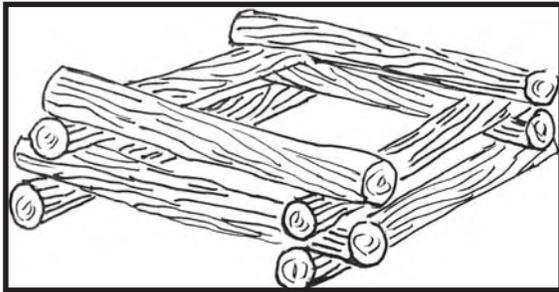
By Oclides Quintana Tenorio

Christmas time is that time of year when everyone is filled with feelings of happiness and joy. Harmony and unity are found everywhere people gather. This is the time when Christians around the world celebrate the birth of the Baby Jesus.

The people of different cultures celebrate the Jesus' birth with the various customs of the different places where they live. Here in New Mexico, we have one of the most beautiful customs found anywhere. These are “*las luminarias*.” This tradition was started in New Mexico and has spread throughout much of the United States.

Today, *las luminarias* are made by filling a small brown paper bag with about four inches of sand in the bottom, folding about an inch of the top of bag to make the bag sturdy then adding a short votive candle on top of the sand in the center of the bag. When the candle is lit, it disperses a warm yellow glow. Originally, the first *luminarias* were made by stacking piñon wood in a square about two feet high and filling the center with wood rich in pitch to make a roaring fire.

These *luminarias* were made by the first Spaniards to colonize New Mexico and were used to light the road as the people made their way to *La Misa del Gallo*, the Midnight Mass at their parish church on Christmas Eve. The women, during these times, had heard from their grandmothers that in Spain, they had a wonderful custom of hanging lamps, known as *faroles*, from their porches and trees during the Christmas festivities.



The women all wished to have these *faroles* to decorate their homes but because they lived in the New World, they did not have such conveniences. One day, a caravan from Veracruz, Mexico came through the area. The caravan brought dishes of fine China, and these dishes were wrapped in very colorful paper, paper that felt as fine as silk.

When they saw these papers, the women decided to make *faroles* with them. They made their *faroles* and put a candle inside each. When they saw how brilliant the colors were, the people were in awe. The colors were like the blue of the sky, the red of a sunset and the yellow of the aspens in the fall in the mountains of the Sangre de Cristos.

There was no wire or string in the New World, so they had to put the *farolitos* on the roof of their house or on the ground. That is how this wonderful custom began and why it has continued to awe into modern times. Every Christmas season sees an influx of visitors to New Mexico who come to see the colorful and festive displays of Yuletide cheer brought on by *luminaria* displays. When these folks go back home, they take stories of the wonderful visions of a Christmas in New Mexico.

New Mexico is very rich in customs and *las luminarias* are but just one of these. Other customs during Christmas time is the pageantry of Los Pastores (The Shepherds) and Las Posadas (night accommodations). Along with the pageantry is the fine food fare that is only experienced during Christmas. Delicacies such as posole, chile, beans, tamales, tortillas, bizcochitos, empanaditas and so much more. New Mexico is the most wonderful place to be during Christmas time. Truly a wonder.

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## “The Christmas Flower”

By Oclides Quintana Tenorio

There was once a very poor little orphan girl who lived in Mexico.

On Christmas Eve, as was their custom, all the people of the pueblo went to Midnight Mass at their big parish church. The little girl covered herself with a thin and tattered shawl. The shawl was all she had for warmth and she was also without any shoes. Barefoot and cold she made her way to church. As she walked, she was thinking of the fine fiesta that was being celebrated that night, which put a slight spring in her step. Still, there was a sense of dread that she could not shake.

When she finally arrived at the magnificent church, she saw all the people entering the church with gifts for the Holy Child.

The little girl hid in a corner by the door and worried that she had no gift to give to the Baby Jesus. She became very sad and was about to go back home when she saw the arrival of a very fine coach at the doors of the church. From this coach emerged a very beautiful and elegant lady.

When the elegant lady neared, she looked at the little girl with pity and concern, and she said, “Child, you are shivering with cold. Why don’t you go into the church for Midnight Mass? Once inside you can warm up and praise the Baby Jesus.”

The little girl began to cry and said to the elegant lady, “But I have not a gift to give to the Holy Child.”

The lady looked around and said to the little girl, “Do you see that weed over there, it is very green? Why don’t you go pick it and present it to the Baby Jesus.”

The little girl plucked the weed and went into the church. As she walked up the aisle, the weed was getting greener. When she finally arrived at the Nativity, the leaves at the top of the plant turned red. The plant had turned into a beautiful flower.

The beautiful flower is now known as the Poinsetta. It was named the Poinsetta by an American minister who was in Mexico at the time. During his time there, he studied and developed the plant. His name was Joel Poinsett.



**Lectures, Field Trips & Special Events**  
(Tentative Schedule)

February 4, 2017 - Annual Meeting  
Growing Up in Taos

March 4, 2017 - Lecture  
-\*-

April 1, 2017 - Lecture  
-\*-

May 7, 2017 - Honoree Luncheon  
National Preservation Month

June 3, 2017 - Lecture  
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July 8, 2017 - Field Trip  
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August 5, 2017 - Lecture  
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First Saturday of the month at 2:00 PM  
Kit Carson Coop Meeting Room  
118 Cruz Alta Road - Taos

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Taos County Historical Society  
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The Taos County Historical Society was formed in 1952 for the purpose of "...preserving the history of the Taos area." This part of New Mexico has a fascinating history, full of people, events, stories and places.

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