

## Socorro County Historical Society, Oral History Tapes

### Ada Ferguson interviewed by Sue Little

*Mrs. Ferguson, when did you come to Socorro County?* 1942. *That's when you came to Socorro, when did you come to Socorro County?* 1932. *When did you come to New Mexico?* In 1922. *Why did you come?* When Preston was a young man I came out to visit him and married him the day I got here. *Where was he?* In Ft. Baird in Silver City. *Was he a patient?* Yes, he was a patient. *Where did you come from Mrs. Ferguson?* Alexandria, Louisiana. That was a Veteran's Hospital there in Louisiana. *You have a tiny bit of accent.* Canadian - I got my nurse's training in Calgary, Alberta and then went back to Hamilton and stayed there till - this is a sad story - stayed there until my father's death, and I went to Detroit and nursed in the City of Detroit Receiving Hospital. At that time I thought I would like to go into the Veterans' Bureau. I was accepted by the Veterans' Bureau - or rather it was the U.S. Public Health Service which was later transferred to the Veterans' Bureau in Alexandria. *Were you in World War I?* No, my father was ill and I knew that his health wouldn't allow me to go. In World War II, I was beyond the age. *Well, tell me when did you go to Albuquerque. How long were you in Silver City?* Less than a year and then went to Albuquerque and stayed there until 1932. *Were you nursing there?* I was for a year and then in the Santa Fe Hospital, the railroad hospital. *The Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe, huh? What's in that hospital now?* It's a mission of the Catholic Church. Then I helped move to the new hospital on Central Avenue before I resigned. *You resigned to go where?* Just to keep house. *After you left Albuquerque, where did you go?* To Magdalena. *How long were you in Magdalena?* About ten years? Yes. *Did you nurse in Magdalena?* Special duty cases, and then I came down to Socorro. *You were rearing your children weren't you? How many children did you have?* I had two. *Did you make the trip by train or by car?* By car. *But your son did work at the station, didn't he?* Oh yes, he was a Western Union boy. *In the days when Western Union was so important. You told me in the time before we began to tape about a cattle drive.* I saw one small cattle drive. We drove out and saw them driving 25 head or so down through a gully or creek bed and it was quite interesting. But I didn't happen to see any of the big cattle drives from the west. *I was interested in what you said about the men at the railroad station working.* Morning, noon, and night, during the cattle drives, and that included Sunday and all the time for my son. *And didn't you have to take his meals down?* I did one day. *And what did Mr. Zimmerly say to you? Was he station manager?* He was the station agent. There was booths there and one was Western Union - and I can't remember the name of the other one, but the two men were there. *And what did he tell your son?* Oh, he said never worry it would only be your mother that bring your meals to you. *Did you know Agnes Cleveland?* I met her at tea her sister gave. At the time the book, No Life for a Lady, was published and Christina Blackburn and Mr. McTavish came to a tea out thee in Datil and it was very interesting. They talked of the different things. *What was the story you told me about the bet he lost? When he went to the barber shop?* No, I don't think it was a bet. The book says it was a bet, but as I understood it some central cattle ranchers were in town that morning and Ray Morley had long red hair and a red beard and always wore

fringed leather jackets. The cattle men said we're business men - we're not so darn picturesque as all that and they had a little meeting and they took Ray to the barber shop and held him down while the barber shaved him and cut his hair. *Was Mr. McTavish in on that?* Mr. McTavish took his picture as he came out of that barber shop. *What about life in Magdalena at that time?* *That was 40 or 50 years ago.* Well, it was small town life. *Just like any small town. Did they have hotels - it was before the day of motels?* The Hammond? was a very big hotel and Mr. and Mrs. Funk had the other hotel down at the Beckham-McTavish store, I can't think of the name of it. It had a nice dining room - it was a nice hotel. The Hammond Hotel was down on the Main Street. *And there was a Chevrolet company there at the time?* Yes. *I was also interested in the night the hotel burned.* Well, my husband was away, and I awakened that night and heard several shots - there was so much shooting. I pulled the covers over my head and went back to sleep and then the next morning when I went downtown I found a stone building at the main square had burned down overnight. And having no sirens or anything they just (----). *What about a flagpole?* There's a flagpole in the main intersection in town, and there is a story years before on election day, they took their elections so seriously that three men lay dead around that flagpole - years before I ever went there so I can't vouch for the truth of it. *It's a good story, anyway. What about Kelly?* Kelly was quite a deserted town when I went there, and in fact the first drive I took up through Kelly there were posters for Calvin Coolidge in the bar windows. And of course there was a lot there. They say the graveyard, so many people put that rare mineral, smithsonite, around the graves. But now, smithsonite is so very rare, one man gave me a couple of rare pieces. *And it all disappeared from the cemetery.* I guess so. Tim Hughes had a very good collection - he was a mining man from there and he had a very good collection of smithsonite. Some of it was in columnar form, and he used to use it as door stoppers. I think he bought it from one woman - this piece that he used for a door stop. And he said he was offered \$700 for the piece that had been used as a door stop. *What about that road you told me about - Corkscrwe Canyon road?* I think it ran out to the Railston ranch and it was a very, very, jigsaw turning road and Jimmy Railston said he was always scared by the speed his mother used in driving that. A new road has been built since. They don't use Corkscrew Canyon. *You remember the road from Magdalene to Socorro being paved?* Yes. *Not the one through Blue Canyon?* No. That was before I went to Magdalena. *When did you come to Socorro?* Well - to stay - in 1942. I came down to take charge of Doc Lemon's? little hospital. *Where was it?* Down the main drag where the Head Start is. *And it was the only hospital in Socorro?* At that time. *You told me about some difficulty he was having getting nurses.* Oh yes, he had been trying to get different nurses, and I came down temporarily until he could get a nurse, but it was '42 and war time, so I decided to stay on. *You stayed for seven years didn't you?* I stayed for seven years until his death. *By that time, did they have another hospital?* No, they built the other hospital afterwards, I think. Different ones took it after his death. But I didn't go back. I had worked for the one man and knew what he did and I thought I should try something different so I went over to the TB San until it went to Ft. Stanton. In fact I worked eleven and a half years in the State of New Mexico. I quit in the spring of '61. For which I got a pension. *That's good - everything helps. As you look back now on Socorro County generally, what are the biggest changes you find?* Oh, more new buildings. Of course, the college here has grown so tremendously and there are more motels and restaurants.

More tourists all the time. *Any other memories?* If you would give me half an hour, I could think up an answer, but not right off.