

Preface

The availability of a large assortment of historic photographs makes it possible to present the history of Socorro County and environs as a long-lived spectator might have seen it. Photographers were very scarce in New Mexico before the mining and cattle boom times of the 1880's. Until that time it was not only inconvenient but actually dangerous to roam the countryside taking photographs. When sensitized dry plates coated with gelatin emulsion became available in the 1870's the photographer was liberated from the necessity of traveling with a portable laboratory equipped to prepare and process wet collodion plates for immediate exposure and processing. The population explosion of the 1880's in New Mexico attracted portrait photographers to the newly founded towns. Among them were the partners, Joseph E. Smith and Edwin Bass, who set up studios in the mining towns of Socorro, Magdalena, and Kelley in 1884. In addition to making thousands of portraits of miners, ranchers, merchants, professional people, and their families, J. E. Smith made hundreds of pictures of railroads, ranches, mines, landscapes, schools, churches, engineering projects, public events, etc. The photos have been organized in folders according to topic except for one folder labeled Miscellaneous. It holds a variety of interesting unclassifiable subjects.

Most of the photographs in this collection were made by J. E. Smith and preserved by his descendants. Suzanne Smith, his great granddaughter holds them in custody at present and has allowed them to be copied in digital form and used in this collection for viewing only and not for reproduction.

Other sources of photographs are the Socorro Fire Department, Donald McKelvey (an alumnus of NMT), Frances Senn (Board of Directors, Socorro County Historical Society), the Hammel Museum, and the personal files of the author, K. R. Brower

Historical information has been drawn from the following sources:

Warren A. Beck and Ynez D. Haase, **Historical Atlas of New Mexico**, University of Oklahoma Press (out of print)

Charles L. Niemann, **Spanish Times and Boom Times, Toward an Architectural History of New Mexico**, Socorro County Historical Society

Paige W. Christiansen, **Of Earth and Sky**, New Mexico Institute of Mining and Technology

Paige W. Christiansen, **College on the Rio Grande: The Story of a Small School** (out of print)

John DeWitt McKee and Spencer Wilson, **Socorro Photographer, Joseph Edward Smith, 1858-1936**, Socorro County Historical Society

Oral History Tapes, A. B. Baca, Clarence Hammel, Leo Fay, and Bill McCarty, Socorro Public Library

Robert Eveleth, Senior Mining Engineer, New Mexico Institute of Mining and Technology

New Mexico Wildlife, Vol. 48, No. 4