

# Socorro County Historical Society

Post Office Box 921  
Socorro, New Mexico 87801

## Membership News • Autumn 2015

Printed periodically

### Oktoberfest 2015

The Hammel Museum and the Socorro County Historical Society once again hosted a very enjoyable Oktoberfest. Good food, drink, music, and friends. It is encouraging to see expanding crowds and new faces over the past couple of years. And, obtaining a few new members as well. SCHS strives to make Oktoberfest a fun and enjoyable "community picnic" day in a our shaded wintergarten, and of course provide good exposure to the Society.



We thank all who helped out with the food and the great music and entertainment, and of course those who attended. Oktoberfest is the main fund raising activity of SCHS of the year. Revenues raised are crucial for keeping the Hammel Brewery building in good shape, required maintenance, and steady programs of improvements, and other SCHS activities.

The music every year is always great and with a variety to suit most everyone's taste.

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#### NOTICES and EVENTS:

**Open House for the Socorro Train Gang and drawing for the Christmas Raffle Train**  
Saturday, Dec. 5, 9 a.m. – 1 p.m.  
at the Hammel Museum  
All model trains on display for the public

Due to the Holidays and colder weather  
**There will be no Open House in January 2016**

**There will be no SCHS Board meeting**  
December 2015 nor January 2016

**The next Open House and historic auto tour**  
to Parida Hill will be Saturday, Feb. 6

**Visit the new SCHS Website:**  
[www.Socorro-History.org](http://www.Socorro-History.org)

Growing with plenty of Socorro history,  
photos, maps, articles, etc.  
Plus ... past newsletters

#### Your SCHS Board of Directors:

<b>President</b>	Chuck Zimmerly
<b>Vice President</b>	Dr. Peggy Hardman
<b>Treasurer</b>	Prescilla Mauldin
<b>Secretary</b>	Paul Harden

#### Board Members:

Jon Spargo	Roy Heatwole
Kay Krehbiel	Don Wolberg



This year's musical groups were:

**The Rawhide Band** opened Oktoberfest with good toe-stomping classic country and western songs many enjoy.

**Dr. Comstock's Oompah Band** with good German and Bavarian music kicks off Oktoberfest every year in mood-setting style.

**The Roon Band** – who doesn't enjoy the interesting variety of folk-rock music from Johnny Dean, Jim Ruff and Ronna Kalish?

**Toby Jaramillo and Band** always puts Oktoberfest into the fiesta spirit with those great Spanish tunes and vocals.

**The Cottonwood School student dancers** were our special act this year. Accompanied by the Oompah Band and led by Sheri Armijo, the children well entertained us with the Chicken Dance and a Polka. They asked if we'd invite them back for next year. We did!

We know how much the live music is appreciated by all in attendance and our deepest thanks for their performances. These bands have performed at Oktoberfest for many years, always donating their time to help us out – and to entertain the community. Our sincere appreciation.

We did have a little rain shower about 12:45 that scared off quite a few (it was a nice little downpour for about 10 minutes). However, once the rain stopped, the Roon Band stepped up to perform and many of the seats were again filled with those enjoying the music and a brat lunch.

Once again, Craig Hennies kept the grill hot and hoppin' with hamburgers to order and beer cooked brats. Many others prepared the sauerkraut, beans, and other condiments, and kept the food line moving. See you all next year with more good food and music.



Fresh grill cooked brats and hamburgers . . . with all the fixin's



We don't think anyone went home hungry or thirsty



**The Rawhide Band opens the show**



**The Oompah Band getting ready to play**



**And away they go with their legendary big-band sound**



**Cottonwood Charter School dancers entertaining everyone with their dances**



**Cottonwood Charter School teacher Sheri Armijo coaching her dance students**

# ARMENDARIS RANCH TOUR

Saturday, September 26, 2015

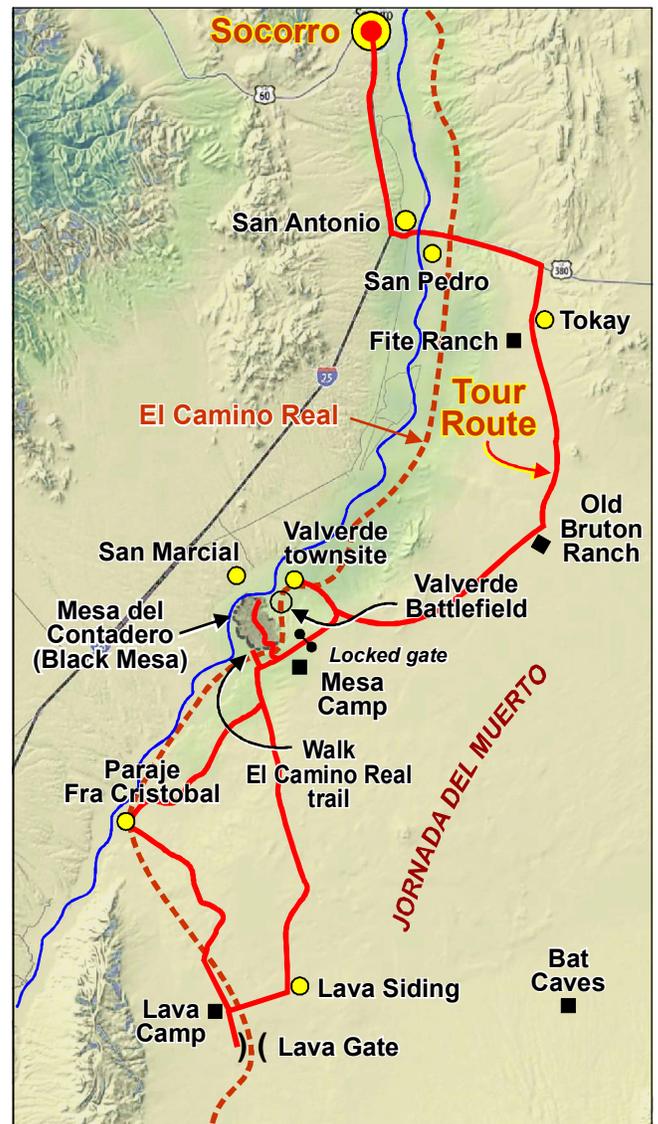
The Socorro County Historical Society sponsored a guided tour in September of the Armendaris by special permission from the ranch. By all accounts, it was a successful day out on the Jornada del Muerto desert to see and experience many historical sites on the ranch few people get to see. The weather was ideal: crystal blue skies, warm but not hot, and a gentle breeze for a lovely autumn day.

The Armendaris makes the ranch available for occasional tours under limited controlled conditions and with qualified guides. It appears SCHS will be allowed two similar tours next year. We have requested May 14 for the spring tour and October 15, just after Oktoberfest, for the fall tour. When the dates are approved by the ranch in early 2016, members will be notified and information placed on the SCHS website.

The tour departed Socorro about 9 a.m. Just getting to the ranch takes about two hours with a 40 mile dirt-road drive to the Bruton Ranch, and another 10 miles to the Valverde townsite on the Rio Grande.

Valverde was a lucrative agricultural town north of Black Mesa. Like nearby San Marcial, Valverde was destroyed in the 1929 flood, and permanently inundated in the 1937 flood. Many Socorroans have their roots in Valverde.

There are only a few things remaining of the town, namely the ruins of the church, the nearby WPA built school (the 1937 flood struck before the school was completed) and some nearby foundations of the former homes. The rest of the town site is covered with fine silt and being



encroached by the expanding bosque of the river.

The following photographs show some of the other historical stops on the tour.

## Off we go . . .



Photo: Paul Harden

The road to Valverde and the Armendaris Ranch



Photo: Colleen Gino

The old Bruton Ranch abandoned for the Trinity Test

## Arriving Valverde



Photo: Paul Harden

Dr. Peggy Hardman describing the townsite upon our arrival

## Armendaris Ranch Tour (con't)

### Exploring the Valverde townsite



Photo: Peggy Hardman

**Some of the tour-goers exploring the old WPA built school**



Photo: Paul Harden

**Remnants of the Valverde church**



Photo: Peggy Hardman

**A respectful visit to the Valverde cemetery**

### Entering the Ranch



Photo: Kelly Gatlin

**Entering the locked north gate of the Armendaris Ranch. Fortunately, the guide had the keys!**

### Lava Siding and Section House



Photo: Paul Harden

**Inside look at the old abandoned Santa Fe RR Section House at Lava Siding.**



Photo: Peggy Hardman

**Board member Roy Heatwole "taking a hike" along the siding**

### Lava Camp



Photo: Peggy Hardman

**The tour caravan arriving at Lava Camp**



Photo: Kelly Gatlin

**About the only sign of civilization on the Jornada del Muerto**

### Lunch at Paraje



Photo: Peggy Hardman

**Our lunch stop at Paraje Fra Cristobal on the Camino Real**



Photo: Kelly Gatlin

**The only oryx that posed long enough for a photo**



Photo: Kelly Gatlin

**The drive up Black Mesa**



Photo: Kelly Gatlin

**Guide Paul pointing out San Marcial from atop the mesa**

Higher resolution photos of the above (and a few more) are on our website at:  
[http://socorro-history.org/TOURS/tour\\_002.htm](http://socorro-history.org/TOURS/tour_002.htm)

**Sunset and moonrise on the Jornada del Muerto**

An Armendaris tour is a long day, with the goal to depart the ranch and arrive at the old Bruton Ranch before nightfall. On this trip, the sunset definitely got our attention. Everyone took advantage of an unscheduled stop to get plenty of colorful photographs.

Our trip was the day before the September 27th "blood moon" and lunar eclipse. From the Bruton Ranch, the beautiful sunset and the rising full moon cast an eerie sense of solemn loneliness on the Jornada del Muerto, which we seemed destined to witness.



Photo: Paul Harden

**An unscheduled tour stop to admire the sunset**



Photo: Colleen Gino

**Sunset over the San Mateos**



Photo: Colleen Gino

**Another view of a colorful sunset from the Jornada**



Photo: Peggy Hardman

**The moon rising over the Oscura Mountains**



Photo: Kelly Gatlin

**Full moon rising over the Bruton Ranch corrals**



Photo: Paul Harden

**Full moon at the Bruton windmill and water tank**

## A Letter from Fort Craig, 1885

The Socorro County Historical Society recently received a generous gift from Mr. Charles Bennett. It is a hand-written letter home penned by Cpl. Clarence Chrisman, Company F, 13th U.S. Infantry. The letters provide an interesting insight to military life in Territorial New Mexico while stationed at Forts Craig and Wingate.

The first Fort Wingate was near present day Grants from 1862–1868, then relocated west to be nearer to the Navajo nation. Cpl. Chrisman's march described below left from the later Fort Wingate near present day Gallup. Fort Craig was closed only weeks after the below letter was written.

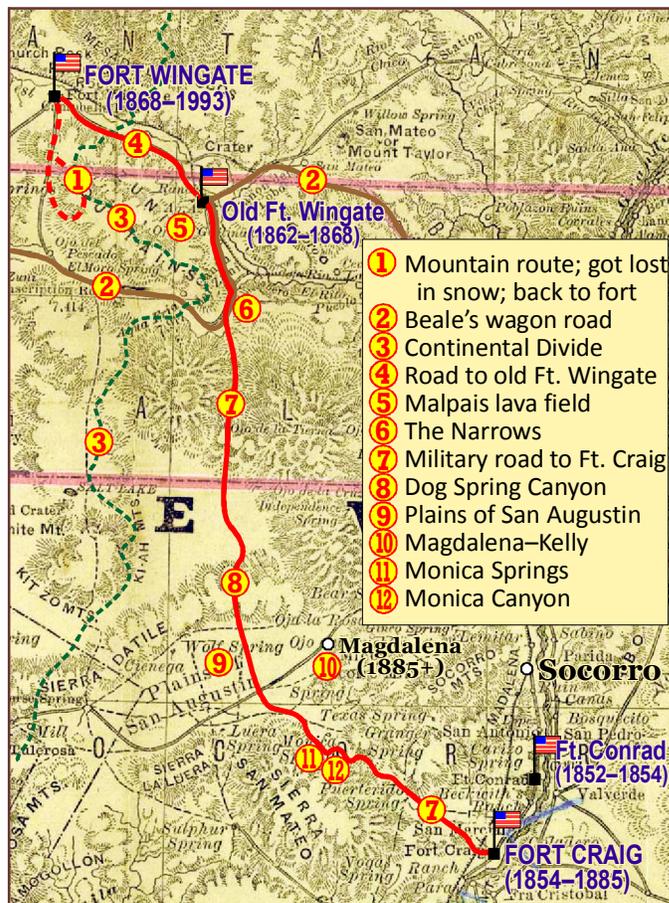
Ft. Craig, NM  
Feb. 27th, '85 (1885)

Dear Mother,  
No doubt you will think that I should have written earlier and told you all about the trip I made to this place [Fort Craig] but I beg pardon on the grounds of having to use a few days to recuperate and to get everything arranged so as to have things comfortable and convenient in the future.

When we left [Fort] Wingate it was a lovely sun shiny day but before we had gone many miles from there we met with weather as severe and cold as any I ever saw, and for several days we could almost imagine we were on some sort of a Greely expedition or other and that we were as near finishing the north pole as any one could have been.

In 1881, Adolphus Greely led an expedition to the Arctic. Only six survived and returned in 1884 with stories of a shipwreck, starvation, mutiny and cannibalism to survive. When Chrisman wrote this letter, the Greely Expedition were current newspaper stories receiving much public interest.

Altogether we were fourteen days on the road. For eight days the only water we had was that which we secured by melting snow and it would seem that the more you drank of that the more you wanted ... The higher we ascended the continental divide the deeper got the snow and the colder the weather. One day we traveled about thirty five miles through a blinding snow storm and huge snow drifts so cold and disagreeable was it that we had to walk to keep from



Map of Cpl. Chrisman's march from Fort Wingate to Fort Craig in Feb. 1885

freezing to death and then when we got into camp that night we did not know where we were, all we knew was that we were really and truly lost in the mountains. Next morning we knew but very little more and I am sure we never would have found our way out had we not taken the back trail to where we started from and from that point taking a new road and a less snowy one.

It appears the men took the road from Ft. Wingate to Zuni pueblo to intercept Beale's Wagon Road where they got lost in the deep snow in the Zuni Mountains (map #1). They retreated to their Fort Wingate start to travel the road to old Ft. Wingate which proved to have less snow. Here they intercepted the military road to Fort Craig.

Although it snowed for seven days while we were out we were quite sure none of it fell from the sky. It was so cold and the wind was blowing so hard that I think the storms were caused by the snow blowing across the valleys from mountain to mountain.

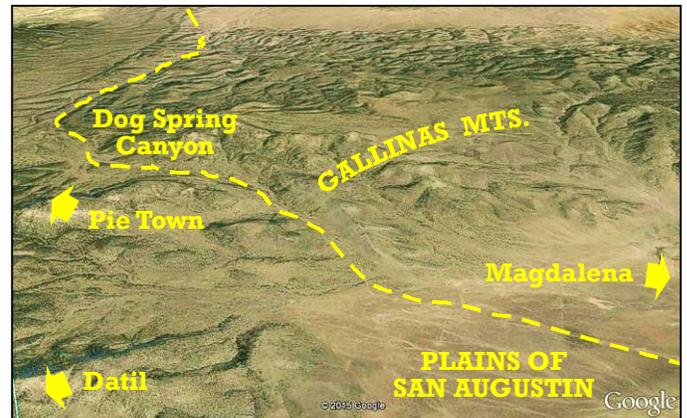
One night I and my bed fellow, or “bunkee” as we call them in the army, made our bunks down on a nice bare spot when the wind had blown all the grass away and piling the brush behind us thought we would have a nice place to sleep. Just imagine how astonished we were when on awakening the next morning we were so completely covered with snow that we could scarcely crawl from under the weight of it, and wasn't that a nice place to arrange our toilet.

I would have liked to have had some of those fellows back there who sleep on feather beds all their lives to have been there that morning.

After we had been out about seven days the snow began to feel lighter and soon we were out of the snow altogether. After we got out of the mountains and fairly crossed the continental divide we were again ushered into beautiful spring like weather and when we arrived here we found the weather was almost like summer. Indeed it is so warm here that the grass is already green and even the “never to be gotten away from” house fly has begin to put in his appearance.

*The men followed the Military Road skirting the Malpais lava flows and the mountains (map #5–#7). Crossing the Gallinas Mountains northeast of Datil through Dog Spring Canyon (map #8), they are now in the grassy Plains of San Augustin (map #9).*

... from that time on our trip was very pleasant indeed, except for one day and then it would have been all right if we had found water but we did not so we had to go without a drink of any kind until almost morning when five or six of the fellows who had walked eight or ten miles to a town brought back several canteens full of water. I was on frost when



**Route of the command where Cpl. Chrisman describes emerging onto the “open prairie” of the Plains of San Augustin. Camping that night at Monica Springs, they arrived at Fort Craig the following day.**

they got back and you can bet I didn't say much until I had taken a good drink. It's a terrible thing to have to make a dry camp, especially do the animals suffer, although it is said that a government mule is the toughest thing in the world.

*The Military Road passed through Monica Canyon and to a popular campsite at Monica Springs, which apparently was dry (map #11–12). The only “town” in 1885 was the mining camp of Kelly, or newly founded Madgalena, and indeed 8 mi. distant. From the canyon, the road was similar to today's NM107.*

Even while suffering extremely with the cold should some magnificent scene suddenly burst upon my vision the desire to transfer it to paper was so great that I could almost have cried to think totally unable I was to do it. It seems to me that there is no one in the world who sees so much that is beautiful in nature and has the power of appreciating it as well as I do. Things look beautiful to me. I think that look decidedly common place and ugly in other eyes. For instance we were going along one day when suddenly coming out on the open prairie from behind some foot hills, magnificent snow capped mountains presented themselves to our view; I says to one of my comrades “Just look at those beautiful mountains, ain't they lovely?” “Humph” he grunted, “I can't see anything so very pretty about them.”

*“Coming out on the open prairie” was the flat expanse of the Plains of San Augustin. The snow capped mountains are North and South Baldy peaks, east of present day Magdalena.*

The Rio Grande runs about a hundred yards from our quarters [at Fort Craig] and we go down almost every day boating and fishing. Geese, ducks, deer, and in fact almost every kind of game abound on and near the river and you may well believe we exercise all our skill and ingenuity to secure enough of them for our own personal use. While on the road down here we saw hundreds of large herds of antelope and deer.

I think I have written enough for once and I don't intend to mail this until after we are paid ...

*Cpl. Chrisman got paid on March 10, 1885, about two weeks after he began his letter home to his mother. The concluding page of the letter is shown below, and concludes (in part) as follows:*

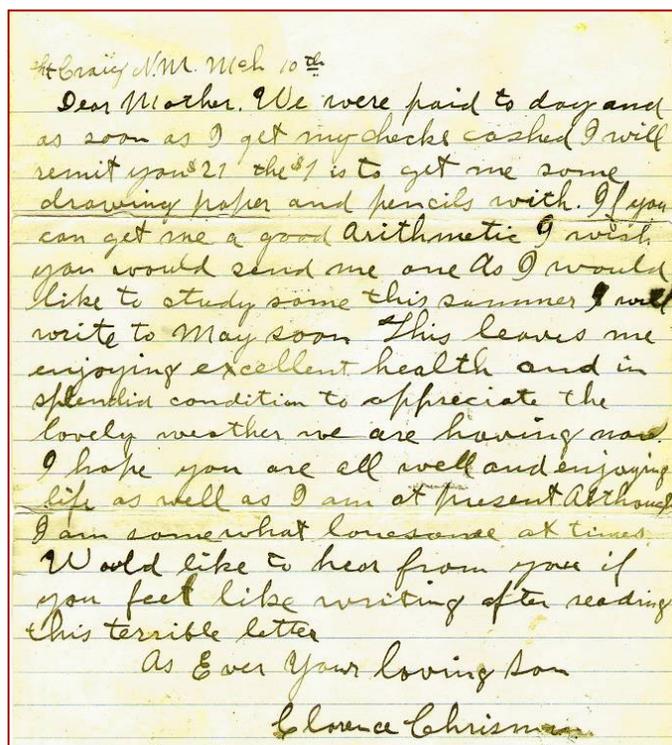
Ft. Craig, NM Mch. 10th

Dear Mother.

We were paid today and as soon as I get my checks cashed I will remit you \$21 the \$1 is to get me some drawing paper and pencils with.

... Would like to hear from you if you feel like writing after reading this terrible letter.

As Ever Your loving Son,  
Clarence Chrisman



Ft. Craig, N.M. Mch 10th  
Dear Mother. We were paid today and as soon as I get my checks cashed I will remit you \$21 the \$1 is to get me some drawing paper and pencils with. If you can get me a good arithmetic I wish you would send me one as I would like to study some this summer I will write to May soon. This leaves me enjoying excellent health and in splendid condition to appreciate the lovely weather we are having now. I hope you are all well and enjoying life as well as I am at present. Although I am somewhat homesick at times. Would like to hear from you if you feel like writing after reading this terrible letter.  
As Ever Your loving Son  
Clarence Chrisman

*Shortly after this letter was written, Fort Craig was ordered closed by the Military Department in March 1885. The men decommissioned the fort and sent all weapons, supplies and furnishings to Forts Union and Wingate. Chrisman was among the last to leave Ft. Craig in June accompanying the supply train to Ft. Wingate. For the next two years, Chrisman was almost constantly on the trail during the historic "Geronimo campaign," mostly in southern New Mexico from the Gila to the bootheel, and into southern Arizona. Geronimo and his small remaining band of warriors surrendered at Skeleton Canyon on Sept. 4, 1886, symbolizing the end of the "Indian Wars." On Sept. 16, Chrisman arrived again at Ft. Wingate and was discharged from the Army in early 1887. He returned to his home in St. Louis, where he spent the rest of his life.*

*At the end of the Indian Wars and the arrival of the railroad, most Territorial Army forts were closed. Ft. Wingate was one of the few that remained active for munitions storage until being closed in 1993 with cleanup still continuing.*

**Clarence Clyde Chrisman** was born March 23, 1863 in Bloomington, IL. At an early age, his family moved to St. Louis, where Clarence was raised. He joined the Army in 1884 at age 21. A year later, he found himself in New Mexico stationed at Forts Wingate and Craig during the Indian Wars. He was a corporal in Company F, 13th U.S. Infantry during the Geronimo Campaign of 1885–1886.

During the campaign, Chrisman kept a journal and sketch book, which he published in 1927 entitled "Winners of the West." He died the following year in St. Louis on Feb. 28, 1928 at 64 years of age.

The Chrisman collection of his original journals and sketch books are now in Tucson at the Arizona Historical Society. How fortunate that one of his letters is now in possession of the Socorro County Historical Society thanks to Mr. W. Charles Bennett, Jr. of Santa Fe, NM.