

Socorro County Historical Society

Post Office Box 921
Socorro, New Mexico 87801

Membership News • Spring/April 2020

Printed periodically

SCHS is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization

History in the Making?

Reading old issues of the *Socorro Chieftain* newspaper, one can read articles of the deadly “Tonto fever” of 1883, or the smallpox epidemic that swept through Socorro County in 1897, and of course the 1917-1918 Spanish flu. Some day, future historians will read about the 2020 Corona virus and wonder what that was all about. History in the making.

Like most activities, all planned events of SCHS have been suspended until the isolation and travel restrictions have been lifted and gathering in groups is deemed safe.

The last SCHS Board meeting was held on March 10, 2020, just as gathering in groups, self-isolation and social distancing guidelines were being issued. It was decided that all SCHS events should be suspended, including the following:

SCHS Annual Meeting, held each April or May per our bylaws, has been postponed. The public program and election of officers will hopefully be rescheduled for later in the year.

Friends of El Camino Real also had a nice annual meeting planned with notable speakers that was also postponed.

The Auto Tours planned for San Marcial and the Valverde townsites will hopefully be rescheduled for early Autumn.

The monthly Hammel Open House, and all requests for tours, has been suspended until further notice.

Board meetings are currently suspended.

Oktoberfest – see “Society News” next page.

The membership will be informed of changes and when SCHS events will be rescheduled through this newsletter or direct email.

More Society News next page

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SCHS Annual Membership just \$20/yr

Enjoying the newsletter but not a member? (Gasp!)

Join or renew via our website

<http://socorro-history.org/>

Your SCHS Board of Directors:

President	Chuck Zimmerly
Vice President	Hannah Brower
Treasurer	Prescilla Mauldin
Secretary	Paul Harden

Board Members:

Jon Spargo	Roy Heatwole
Kay Krehbiel	Claudette Gallegos

Bob Eveleth – Past President Ex-officio

Visit Us: www.socorro-history.org

or our FaceBook page:

**Socorro County
Historical Society**

SOCIETY NEWS

Oktoberfest for 2020 is “on hold,” hoping that public activities will once again be allowed by October. The annual **Festival of the Cranes** in November has also been cancelled for 2020 out of an abundance of caution. Of course, that is a major national event for which months of advanced planning is required. Oktoberfest could be planned in less time than usual if needed.

Quite a bit of discussion on Oktoberfest was conducted at the March SCHS Board meeting.

SocorroFest. As most members are aware, the City of Socorro has held their annual Socorro Fest on the same first Saturday in October as the SCHS Oktoberfest the past two years. This has been both positive and negative for SCHS.

Our music and entertainment groups have been very gracious donating their time and talents to support Oktoberfest. Many also perform at Socorro Fest. This has caused scheduling conflicts and a burden on the groups in relocating from the Hammel to the plaza for back-to-back performances.

While Socorro Fest has brought additional people to our Oktoberfest — many attend for the free entertainment only with few purchasing meals or drinks. Oktoberfest is our main fund raising event of the year. A noted decrease in revenue has been experienced over the past two years in spite of good attendance.

Rescheduling Oktoberfest. As a result of these two major issues, and other factors, the Board has decided to hold our next Oktoberfest separately from Socorro Fest in 2020. If Socorro Fest is again held on the first Saturday in October, Oktoberfest will be held on October 10, the second Saturday of the month.

SCHS fully supports Socorro Fest – it is a worthwhile major event in Socorro. Their planning committee has worked with SCHS well to support us. The scheduling conflicts and drop in revenue are simply unanticipated results.

This all depends on what the Covid-19 situation will be like in October and whether such public gatherings will yet be allowed. Currently, Covid-19 is tracking a moving target making looking ahead several months virtually impossible at present.

The SCHS Board also discussed another concern of Oktoberfest: just how much longer it can be sustained. Board members and volunteers are all aging (like all of us); the planning, work required, and loss of volunteers is becoming quite a burden. Fortunately, several volunteers from the Socorro Old Car Club gave us a desperate hand for 2019. We need new blood! Our hope to recruit some new faces for our Board and Oktoberfest volunteers. However, this is problematic with the current state of ordered distancing and isolation.

If you have any thoughts on any of these SCHS or Oktoberfest issues, please contact one of the SCHS Board members. All ideas are welcome.

SCHS Business Continues

SCHS is not idle in spite of all the shut downs. We continue to get requests for local historical information, photos, or other support.

Bob Eveleth has been helping individuals writing books from Elfege Baca to area railroad operations.

Paul Harden has recently been contacted to escort two groups for historical research. The first group is PaleoWest research group, hired by the Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) to catalog historical features in the San Marcial area for future reference. Several team members were on last year’s San Marcial tour. This is in response to the bosque fire two years ago that threatened historical sites. The firefighters, BOR and BLM used the San Marcial maps on the SCHS website to locate and protect the railroad roundhouse and other areas, for example. This survey work will occur in the next few weeks.

The second group is Conservation by Design in Arizona. They have been hired to map and survey El Camino Real trail for the National Park Service and National Historic Trails. The best trail maps they have found, they said, were on the SCHS website. That escorted tour to visit the trail is pending due to company Covid-19 travel restrictions.

A sampling of other activities we’ve been busy with are contained in this newsletter.

About this Newsletter

There was no newsletter for Winter 2019-2020. It contained information on the SCHS Annual Meeting, El Camino Real presentation, San Marcial tour, and other items – all of which have been cancelled. This didn’t leave much for a newsletter, not even much for the Spring 2020 newsletter.

Then, SCHS received some invaluable photographs from several parties, some of which are in this issue. Then Bob Eveleth became a life saver with his article on Captain Jack Crawford. It is portions of a more complete article he is preparing for NMT. Many thanks, Bob. With all future SCHS activities on hold, every attempt will be made to issue more frequent newsletters while in our “stay at home” status to hopefully fulfill your “history fix.” You do like history, don’t you?

Stay healthy everyone during these difficult times, and please remember to renew your membership.

– Paul Harden
SCHS Secretary

SCHS MEMBERSHIP DUES

Membership dues for 2020 are now due.

We normally collect about half our membership dues at our Annual Meeting in April, which was cancelled per Covid-19 isolation orders. Dues are also paid by mail, or PayPal from our website, following our Annual Meeting. A few even pay dues at Oktoberfest, also uncertain this year.

For 2020, this newsletter announcement is the only means we have to ask you to please renew your SCHS membership. It is more important than ever as other sources of Society revenue have dwindled to zero and our modest overhead for utilities, insurance,

Hammel alarm system and other items continue. In spite of the current hardships we're experiencing, we hope you are able to afford your \$20 annual dues.

Mail your dues to:

Socorro County Historical Society
P.O. Box 921
Socorro, NM 87801

Or from our **website** using PayPal or debit /credit card:
<http://www.socorro-history.org/>
(Upper left box on the home page)

Thank you for your continued support of SCHS.



Chester Potter – Railroader and Vigilante

SCHS was recently contacted by a Dan Potter from California. He wanted to know if we knew of his great grandfather who lived in Socorro for many years, **Chester D. Potter**. We told Dan we knew his great grandfather well. He sent us a photo he had found of Chester while he lived in Socorro, as no known photo of him exists.

Chester Potter's name appeared in about every issue of the *Socorro Chieftain* for years. The train time table published in the newspaper for the AT&SF railroad was signed, "C.D. Potter, Agent." As the railroad Agent, he was well known in Socorro.

However, Chester held another prominent role in local history as one of the members of the Socorro vigilantes, known officially as the Socorro Committee for Safety. Over three years, 1880–1883, they took the law into their own hands and executed seven men – six by hanging from the "hanging tree" near the Socorro plaza. In later years, Chester authored the booklet, "Reminiscences of the Socorro Vigilantes," the only first hand witness account of their activities.



Photo: SCHS archives, courtesy Dan Potter
Chester D. Potter, AT&SF Agent and member of the Socorro Vigilantes.

A. T. & S. F. R. R. TIME TABLE.	
GOING NORTH.	
Passenger, - - -	2:30 a.m.
Emigrant, - - -	3:08 a.m.
Freight, - - -	9:15 a.m.
GOING SOUTH.	
Passenger, - - -	12:45 a.m.
Emigrant, - - -	4:17 p.m.
Freight, - - -	1:25 p.m.
Important to Parties Going East!	
Tickets are now on sale at the depot for all points in the East. Baggage checked through to destination. Ticket office open from 8 a. m. to 5:30 p. m.	
G. D. POTTER, Agent.	



The AT&SF Time Table published in many issues of the *Socorro Chieftain*, signed by C.D. Potter. Note passenger trains arrived and departed Socorro well after midnight!

Thank you, Dan Potter, as the photo is a valuable addition to the SCHS photo archives, as no known photo of Potter was known.

For more information on the Socorro Vigilantes, see the article, "Death of an Editor" on the SCHS website at:
http://socorro-history.org/HISTORY/PH_History/ph.html

John Wallace Crawford

a/k/a

"CAPTAIN JACK"

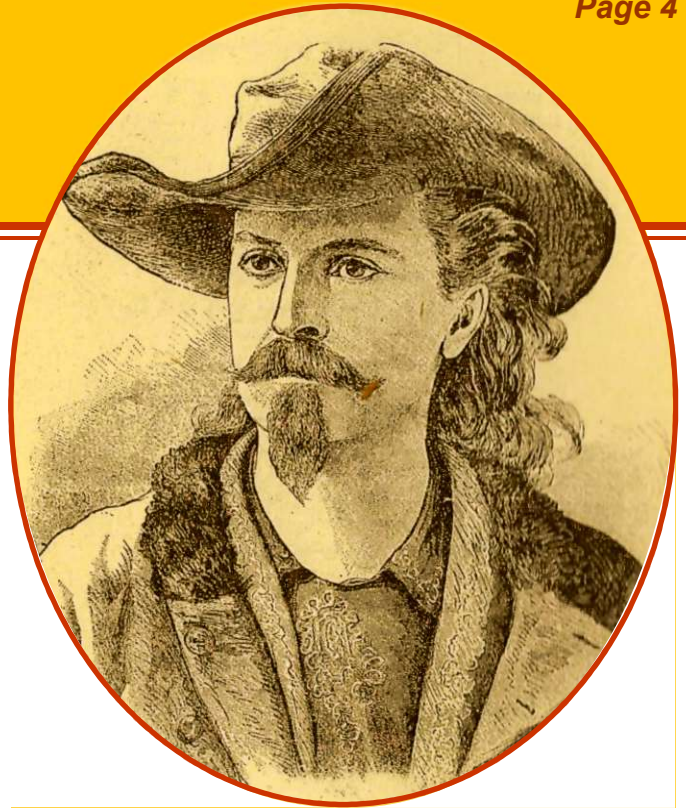
By Robert W. Eveleth

Captain Jack Crawford, popularly known as New Mexico's "Poet-Scout," was born in County Donegal, Ireland in 1847 but came to America in 1854. Crawford got his first taste of mining when he was employed as a young boy in the coal mines at Minersville, PA, and as a result, did not attend school. He entered the army at an early age and was wounded at Spottsylvania, PA on 12 May 1864. One of the Sisters in the hospital taught him to read and write.

Jack Crawford – Prospector and Miner

Crawford was one of the early prospectors and mine developers in the San Andres Mountains area amongst others. According to the Dictionary of American Biography, "He was for a time post trader at Fort Craig, N. Mex. (from whence his early communiqués were often datelined), and later a special agent of the Indian Bureau." Much of his time during the early 1880s was spent either at "Crawford's Camp" in the Little Burro Mountains (extreme northern end of the San Andres just south of Mocking Bird Gap) or at Good Fortune Camp southwest of Salinas Peak. Crawford was remembered as one of the most generous and congenial of the pioneer prospectors and New Mexico's citizens held him in very high esteem. A Socorro Bullion correspondent, visiting Crawford's Little Burros Camp in 1884, found it vacated but the following note pinned to the tent flap: "Miners, prospectors and others passing this way will find water in the keg. If not good, one and a half miles north on trail is plenty. There is baken (sic) and flour and potatoes in the chest – help yourselves, wash nothing and tie up the tent on your departure. I have finished assessment work on 6 claims and have moved to my camp in the San Andres where two men will be at work during the year. Stanton road 7-1/2 miles south. My camp (i.e., Good Fortune Camp) fifteen miles south where you will find grub and water. Yours, Capt. Jack Crawford."

He established a ranch in 1886 on the Rio Grande near San Marcial which he considered his home for the remainder of his life, although he maintained a second residence in Brooklyn, NY. He probably



established, or was one of the founders, of Good Fortune Camp. Brad Prince, in a letter to J. R. DeMier dated February 18, 1899, referred to a mine he once owned near Captain Crawford's camp and stated "the name of that camp where we stayed at night, was Good Fortune." Crawford's scouting skills and nerves of steel were often credited with opening up the San Andres mountains and other areas in New Mexico by eliminating the menace of murderous Apaches. Crawford himself stated in his first communiqué with the Socorro Bullion (5/1/1883, p 3) "Less than four years ago, the writer prospected with rifle and pistol and in momentary expectation of begin attacked by the Apaches. Today that portion of the Black Range, San Mateos, Magdalenas, and other sections then infested by the Red Skins are as safe to prospect in as would be the hills of New England, so far as the Indians are concerned." Charles Longuemare, editor of the Bullion (1/1/1884, p 4) offered the following accolade: "Among the deserving mining men of southern New Mexico stands Capt. Jack Crawford, of Fort Craig. With rifle in hand when the frontier was constantly threatened or terrorized by the dread Apaches he wandered from range to range and succeeded under the most adverse circumstances in securing a quantity of very valuable property, among which we note his San Andres claims..." In December 1884, a correspondent of the same paper, writing from 'Crawford's Camp' in the Little Burros (i.e., the

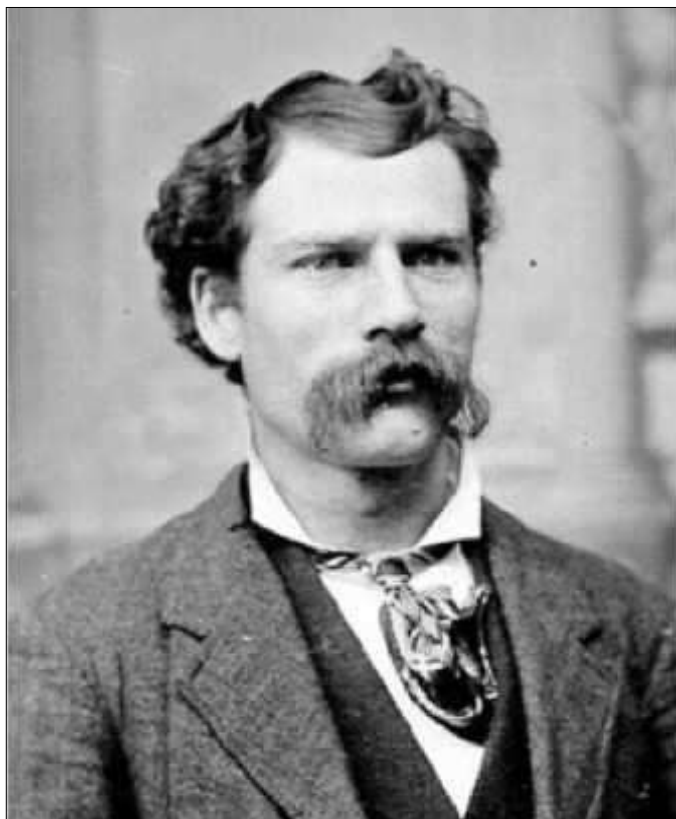


Photo: Author's collection

A young John Crawford arrived in Socorro County as a prospector and miner, with some success, primarily in the San Andreas mountains.

range of hills just south of Mocking Bird Gap) stated: "I know of no one more deserving of success than the "Poet Scout" who found most of his claims when the savage held sway in our Territory, and when he was one of the many whose pluck and skill as a scout and guide and Indian fighter made it possible for us who came after them to prospect in perfect safety."

His scouting prowess was, upon occasion, called into action for his own account. One Joe Reynolds, a particularly dimwitted thief, committed the grievous error of stealing Crawford's "famous running mare, 'Steel Dust.'" "It was a sad day's work for naughty Joe. The Captain is the best Indian scout in the Rocky mountain range and when he once struck the thief's trail he never let up until he had him in custody. The knight of the saddle is now in the Socorro jail awaiting trial (Bullion, 12/1/1884, p 8)."

Regarding his generosity, the Bullion reported in 1892, "Captain Jack is an advocate of the silver dollar; he can earn more of them and give them away for the love of humanity than some of our financiers. If Captain Jack is not a wealthy man it is because he values his friends more than he does money."

Crawford's prospecting efforts in the San Andres Mountains area resulted in the location of many lode-

mining claims and several millsites. These included 6 claims and 3 mill sites in the Oscura Mining district, 15 claims and a mill site in the San Andres Mining district (exact location unspecified), 8 claims in Crawford's Camp and 12 more near Good Fortune Camp

Crawford must have realized early on that his poetic endeavors and entertainment career would be at least as remunerative as his mining ventures. Thus on 28 July 1883 (Socorro county, mining record Book 10, p 409) he conveyed a one-half undivided interest in all his San Andres/Good Fortune Camp properties to Samuel K. Schwenk, of Queen's County, New York, in hopes of them eventually being developed into producing properties. Crawford also attracted the financial backing of H. R. Thurber, one of the early owners of the Copper Queen at Bisbee and together they organized a company to prospect and develop the San Andres claims (Bullion, 10/3/1885, p 1). Some eventually developed into producers according to scattered newspaper accounts but no official production records survive.

Crawford mining activities focused on the San Andes mountains area but he owned many other properties as well. These included mines in the Black Range and a half interest in the Horn Silver in the Organ mountains purchased from the Fay Brothers for \$7,000.

Captain Jack – Poet and Performer

Early in March 1887 Crawford received an offer from a New York theatrical manager – a document which he proudly shared with the editor of the Bullion – to come east and organize a Wild West show similar to that of his friend Buffalo Bill Cody, who was at the time in the process of taking his show to Europe. Crawford accepted and went on to notable fame, although his showmanship did not quite measure up to that of Cody. Then again, Cody's penmanship didn't quite match up to that of the Poet-Scout! Nevertheless, a performance by Captain Jack was said by attendants to be one of life's unique and thoroughly enjoyable experiences.

His Indian scouting experiences were deeply ingrained, and all-too-vivid memories occasionally surfaced: according to the January 2, 1889 Bullion "Captain Jack Crawford, the Poet Scout...recently had a tussle in real with a refractory (sic) red-skinned actor in Cincinnati..." The editor went on to say..." we hear [he] is making money rapidly as well as making a good record in the dramatic world." Later that year he was commissioned New Mexico's representative to

Continued next page 

the New Era Exposition in St. Louis. He offered to advertise the ores of New Mexico's mining camps if the miners would send him representative specimens to display (Bullion, 8/13/1889, p6).

Despite his lucrative and busy performance schedule, Crawford maintained his interests in his New Mexico mining properties for many years – long after all the other pioneer locators had pulled out -- and often returned to the San Andres to perform assessment work, or occasionally make a shipment to a local smelter as late as 1900.

He was back in the Fort Craig area during 1901-02 and, according to the Socorro Chieftain, served as deputy sheriff of San Marcial during that time. Up to the time of his departure as a replacement for Cody, Crawford had invested some \$15,000 in his mining ventures and developments. Before heading east, he said, "I came to New Mexico to stay, and it is probable my bones will rest here, and if my expectations are half realized I shall put many a thousand more into and on top of the ground." He was undoubtedly correct in regard to the latter prediction but fate intervened in the former. S. G. Lasky, author of "Bulletin 8: Ore Deposits of Socorro County," published by the the New Mexico Bureau of Mines, (1932, p. 82) describes the Crawford prospect on the northern flanks of Salinas Peak. Subsequent investigators have concluded that if the mineralization at the Crawford prospect is continuous with similar deposits along the same strike at the Salinas mine a mile to the west (and geologic evidence supports that premise), the deposit could be very significant. Such would be an appropriate monument to the man who probably invested more funds, labor, and time in the area than any other individual.



Photo: "Fort Craig," B.L.M. publication, 2000, pg. 195

Of local interest, Captain Jack Crawford was appointed sutler for the Fort Craig trading post in 1881, where he lived with his wife, Maria, and children Eva and Harry. When the fort closed in 1885, he continued operating the post as a general merchandise store, serving travelers on El Camino Real trail and local ranchers until 1894, when the government sold the fort and 160 acres to Valverde Land Corp., and eventually reverted to the original owners – the Armendaris Ranch, owned by Victoria Land and Cattle Company.

Crawford would eventually write several books, over 100 short stories, numerous poems (some of which may yet be 'uncollected' such as the occasional piece written especially for the Bullion) and a dozen or so songs which were set to music and published. He organized the Boy Heroes of the World, and the United American Veterans and was contributing editor to the Missouri Mule (Who's Who In America, 1814-15, p 547). Not bad for a fellow who was illiterate until almost twenty years of age!

Crawford died in 1917 while in Long Island, New York, and is buried in the National Cemetery in

Continued next page 

Captain Jack Crawford vs. Buffalo Bill Cody



"Buffalo Bill" Cody and his Wild West (show) was hugely popular 1880s-1900s. It shared the Old West with people across America and Europe in a circus type performance.

Captain Jack Crawford performed with Buffalo Bill before striking off on his own, sharing stories and lore of the Old West to compete with Buffalo Bill – so much so even their physical appearances were nearly identical. **Which one is Buffalo Bill and Captain Crawford?**

(Answer at end of article)

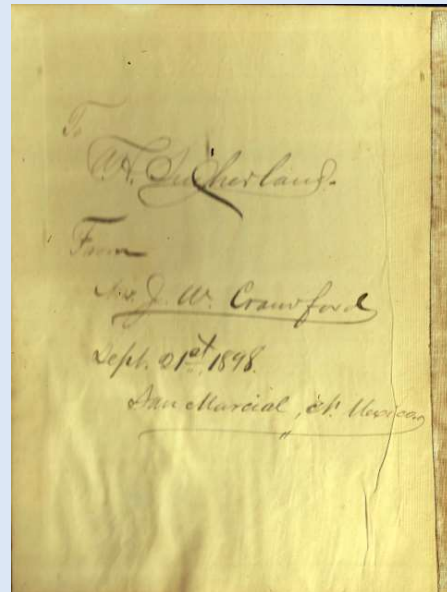
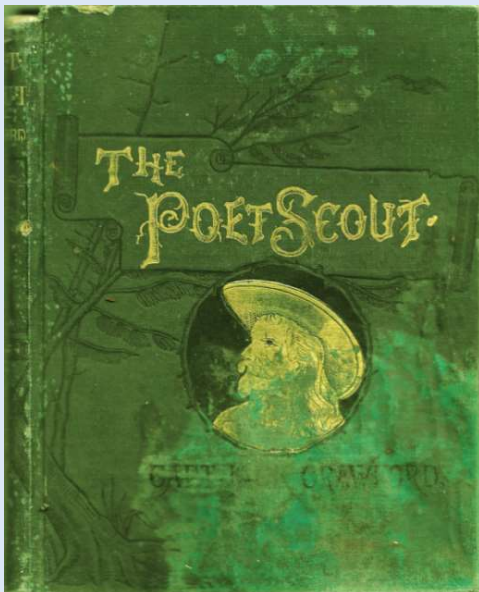
Brooklyn. It is odd that his remains weren't shipped back to his beloved New Mexico for burial – the National Cemetery in Santa Fe would have been a much more appropriate place for him. The high-brow, sniveling chronicler in the "Dictionary of American Biography, quoted above, closed by stating, "His work as a scout was highly praised by his commanders...his verses, though popular in his day, can by no stretch of courtesy be called poetry (!)" I suppose that's why books of poetry by Whitman and Emerson sell for the stately price of a few dozen bucks while those of Crawford command hundreds!

Some of his descendants, the children of great-granddaughter Helen Crawford Richardson, still call Socorro their home. (Crawford's own narrative above would indicate that he began prospecting in the San Andres, etc, as early as 1879. The statement that the Stanton Road" (i.e., government road between Fort Craig and Fort Stanton) is 7-1/2 miles south, places Crawford's "Little Burro" camp in Johnson Park Canyon near the old Mocking Bird Gap mine His comment about there being plenty of water 1 1/2 miles north on the trail may have been a reference to the elusive Mocking Bird Spring. "My camp fifteen miles (south) where you will find grub and water" is the exact distance to Good Fortune Camp.

Photo Answer: Buffalo Bill Cody is on the left; Captain Jack Crawford on the right.



Photo: Author's collection
Captain Jack Crawford toured the country as the popular "Poet Scout," sharing stories and lores of New Mexico and the old west.



Recently, Robert Thornton in Albuquerque donated numerous valuable and historic items to SCHS. He is authoring a book on the San Marcial area. Included in his donations is an autographed copy of Captain Jack Crawford's book, "The Poet Scout," published in 1891. The inscription is signed "To: W. H. Sugarland, From Mr. J. W. Crawford, Sept. 21st, 1898, San Marcial, N. Mexico."

LEO'S CONOCO

SCHS was contacted by an Andy Wagner. He recently retired from the Conoco company. As a retirement project, and for the company, he decided to research the historic locations of all Conoco stations in the west. Sounds like an ambitious project!

His research properly identified Leo's Conoco in Socorro, though did not know it's location or if it still exists. He provided a color post card of Socorro's main street that shows the Conoco station. We were able to give him an exact position of where it was located. Though no longer a Conoco station, it is now the Socorro Tire and Auto shop on the corner of California and San Miguel Street – near today's Brook's Supermarket. The tire business uses the original Conoco building.

Leo's Conoco was built when construction of Interstate 25 reached Socorro. As part of that construction, starting in 1962, California Street was widened from the original 2-lanes to the present 4-lanes. Expansion was to the west, such that all businesses and structures on the west side of California Street were either partially removed or razed to make room for the additional two lanes. This is the reason why there are several empty lots along California Street yet today between the two I-25 exits (and the loss of several historic buildings).

Prior to 1964, there was a popular Standard Oil gas station, later a Sinclair station, on the northwest corner of California and Manzanares. It was razed to make room for the expansion, leaving the building once used for Bambi's Flowers and Gifts as the corner building today.



LEO'S CONOCO SERVICE

Minor - Tune-up

Brake Service

401 North California

Socorro, N.M.

Bus. Ph. 835-9938 Res. Ph. 835-1373

An ad for Leo's Conoco in the Socorro Warrior yearbook for 1968.



Arrow points to Leo's Conoco station on this ca. 1967 post card of Socorro's California Street, looking north, following the 1962-1964 expansion to four lanes.



A similar view of California Street prior to the 1964 expansion to 4-lanes, looking north.

As construction continued on I-25 around Socorro and to the south, all highway traffic was routed through town down the 2-lane California Street. At Manzanares Street, southbound auto and truck traffic was routed around the Plaza and down Park Street where it re-entered old U.S. 85 (today's Frontage Road to Luis Lopez). Northbound traffic used the original two lanes of California Street. Needless to say, the traffic through Socorro made for a very congested mess for several years.

The completion of California Street to four lanes coincided with the opening of I-25 around Socorro, such that by late 1964, traffic was now using the new Interstate highway. Travelers still entered Socorro for gas and food as they do today. With the old Sinclair station gone, there was a need for a downtown service station. This need was met by the construction of Leo's Conoco in 1964 on the corner of San Miguel (Otero) Ave. and California, the main street through town. For a larger location, Leo later moved his station to the southeast corner of Manzanares and California in the 1970s, changing from Conoco to Chevron. When the First State motor bank was built about 1980, Leo moved again to the south end of Socorro by the south I-25 exit. That is the Chevron station next to today's Arby's.

“Corky” Herkenhoff shared a few photographs of San Acacia after the destructive 1929 flood with SCHS. These are one-of-a-kind photos.

Commonly called the “1929 San Marcial flood,” all towns along the Rio Grande from San Acacia to San Marcial received extensive damage. While there are numerous photos of San Marcial after the flood, there are few known photos of the aftermath in the other towns.

Thank you, Corky, for the invaluable photos.



Photo courtesy Corky Herkenhoff

The W. H. Spackman Store

Yes ... San Acacia once had a business district. William H. Spackman owned the main merchandising store in San Acacia since the very early 1900s. According to Mr. Herkenhoff, he operated another store in Magdalena (verified).

A *Daily Albuquerque Citizen* article in 1902 stated, “W.H. Spackman, the big merchant of San Acacia, was in town [Albuquerque] today and reports everything in his town as prosperous.” The business is one of several also listed in a 1904 business directory.

William Spackman married Elsie Zimmer of Socorro in 1905. He died in 1916 of unknown cause, and buried in the San Acacia cemetery. Elsie ran the enterprise until the 1929 flood. The photo above is shortly after the flood and shows the collapsed portion of the store (left side) and the muddy silt in the street.



Photo courtesy Corky Herkenhoff

Railroad Repair

The flood blocked the railroad at San Acacia, the tracks buried under several feet of mud and silt. The New Mexico & Southern Pacific Railway (later purchased by AT&SF) sent a work train with a steam powered shovel to clear the line of mud and debris, as the rare photo shows. Once cleared, new track was laid and the line was repaired in about three days, though it took much longer to reopen the line at San Marcial.

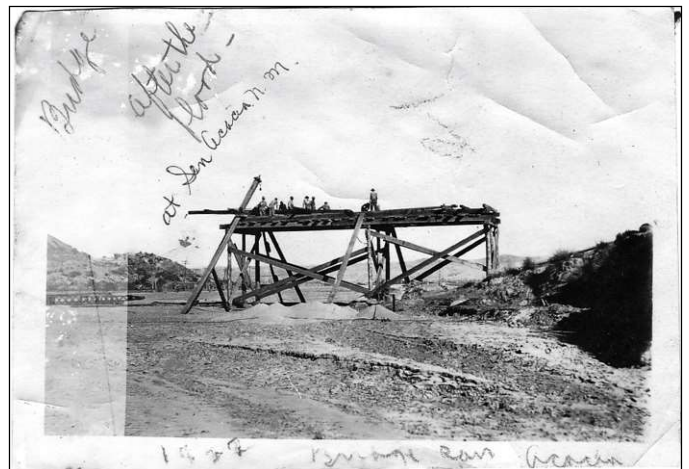


Photo courtesy Corky Herkenhoff

San Acacia Bridge

Prior to 1929, there was a highway bridge for automobile traffic at San Acacia, about where the dam is today. Crossing the Rio Grande, the unpaved highway followed El Camino Real to La Joya, Tome, Peralta and Albuquerque. The photo shows not much was left of the bridge following the flood. A road was quickly built from the Escondida bridge, connected to the Ocean-to-Ocean Highway, to keep the traffic flowing.