

Socorro County Historical Society

Post Office Box 921
Socorro, New Mexico 87801

Membership News • Summer 2020

Printed periodically

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

2020: Perfect Vision

The number 2020 often reminds one of perfect vision. In early 2020, I remember listening to some astrologer on the radio explaining how in 2020, Venus will be in Capricorn, Pluto in retrograde motion, and Libra will be the sign of stability – or something like that. Then added the very number 2020 will be a year of clear vision and clear direction to our lives. Boy, was she wrong!!! For most of us, this has been the fuzziest year in our lives. We can hardly see ahead farther than our next trip to town for groceries, never mind a month or two from now. The proverbial “light at the end of the tunnel” doesn’t even have a glimmer yet.

Fortunately, the effects of the Covid virus have been minimal, especially in rural New Mexico and Socorro County. Regardless, all of our lives have been seriously affected, curtailing our plans and activities.

SCHS has been mostly idle, though we do continue to receive requests for local historical information or assistance. We have accepted some more donations of photographs, helped an author writing a book on “The Lost Adams Diggings” and one on the “Coast to Coast Highway.” SCHS will also be escorting a film crew from UNM for a documentary on acequias and the Camino Real trail in the Socorro area.

Oktoberfest: No decision has yet been made on our annual Oktoberfest. Health restrictions regarding mass gatherings may still be in place in October. Even if lifted, many may feel hesitant to attend a public gathering, including our entertainment groups. We’ll keep you informed.

Memberships: About half the SCHS members have renewed their membership dues for 2020, helping greatly maintain our monthly obligations for the Hammel Museum. Our sincere thanks for your support in these times.

We hope everyone continues to remain safe and healthy.

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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/>

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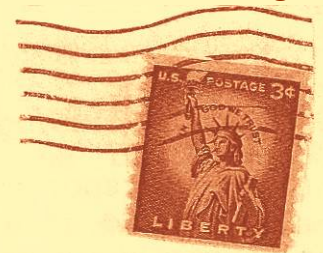
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**Socorro County
Historical Society**

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POSTCARDS FROM SOCORRO



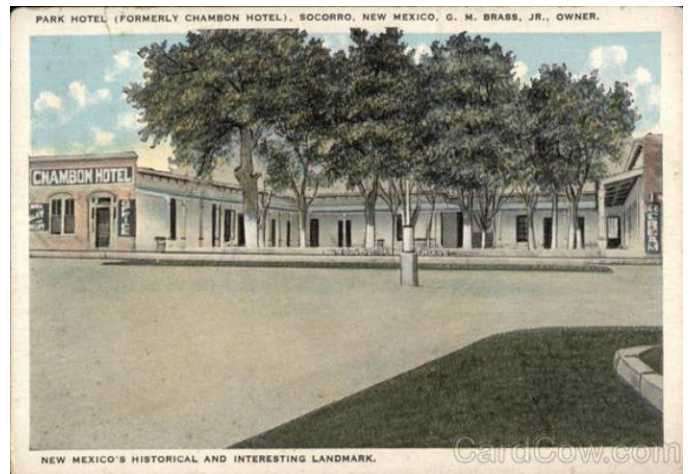
A look at Socorro from old postcards

The first postcard was created and patented by Philadelphia printer John P. Charlton in 1861 and shortly thereafter approved by the Post Office and Congress as an official accepted form of mail. By the 1880s, postcards with illustrations of famous landmarks, such as New York Harbor to the Eiffel Tower, became popular with tourists for sending a short note home to say, "We were here." By the 1920s, black ink illustrations were replaced with printed color photo postcards of a host of subjects.

Socorro was no different. However, there was a boom in Socorro postcards in the mid-1960s as the new Interstate 25 was completed. For several years Socorro was a mess with buildings razed or partially removed for the I-25 construction and the widening of California Street to 4-lanes. The Socorro Chamber of Commerce enlisted novelty printers to produce new color postcards to show the "new, modern Socorro" with new motels and older ones refurbished. Here are a few of those postcards.



State postcards have long been popular with travelers and tourists. This card circa. 1950s.



A 1920s hand colored post card of the Chambon/Park hotel on the Socorro plaza.



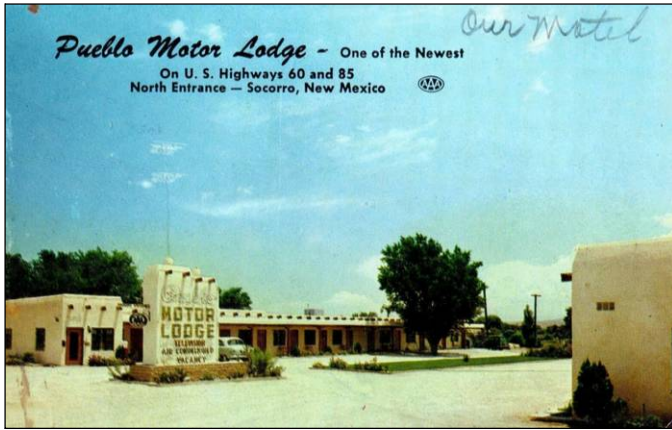
SCHS photo, looking north from junction of California St. and Manazares Ave., a late 1950s view before the expansion of California Street to 4-lanes. Safeway store on left; Coronado Café on right.



Postcard view of the new 4-lane California St. looking north late-1960s. The new Sands Motel on left; Sunset Liquors, White's Hardware and La Villa Shopping Center on right. And ... no traffic?

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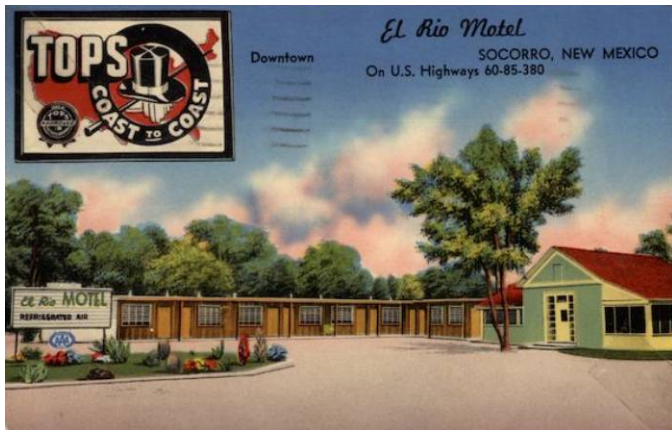
Socorro Motels



The refurbished Pueblo Motor Lodge on the north end of California Street – since razed.



The Sands Motel, on California and Baca streets, was built mid-1960s after I-25 was opened as one of Socorro's new motels. It was only recently closed.



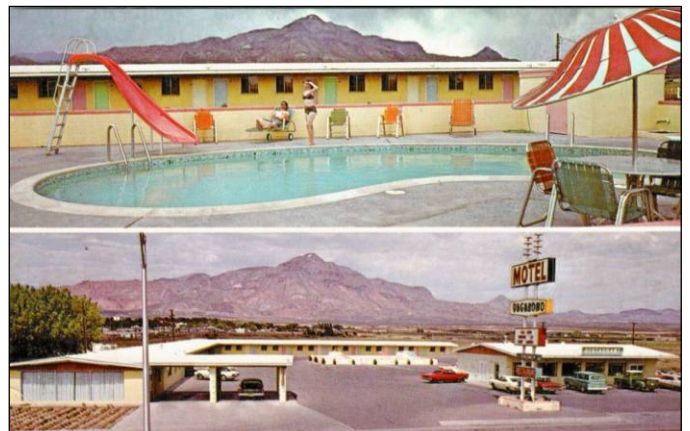
The original single-story El Rio motel before California Street was widened to 4-lanes, pre-1960s.



El Rio Motel and Restaurant following the 1960s renovation and adding the second story – virtually the appearance it still has today.



The Golden Manor Motel and Restaurant was the other 2-story motel in Socorro following the 1962 California Street expansion. It is now the Days Inn Motel.

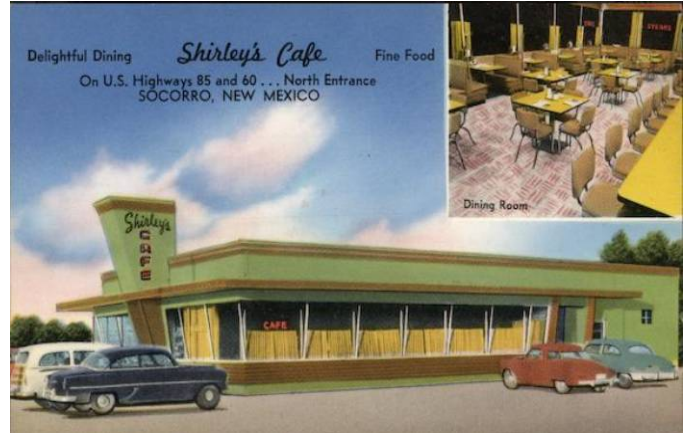


The Vagabond Motel and Restaurant on north California St. in its heydey. The restaurant, now closed, was known for its Chinese food. Motel is now America's Best Value Inn.

Socorro Restaurants



Coronado Café was located in the building now just west of the First State Bank. It was a popular Socorro cafe when highways 60 and 85 came through town, but declined when travelers bypassed the town on I-25.



Shirley's Café, and Shirley's Drive In, were popular eateries in Socorro in the 1960-70s. Closed in 1979 when owner William Aufill moved to Oklahoma. The California St. drive in was razed in 1980.



El Rio Café, in the El Rio Motel, was a popular dining spot for years. The location has been used by several restaurants since, though currently vacant. In the basement was the Rathskeller Lounge.



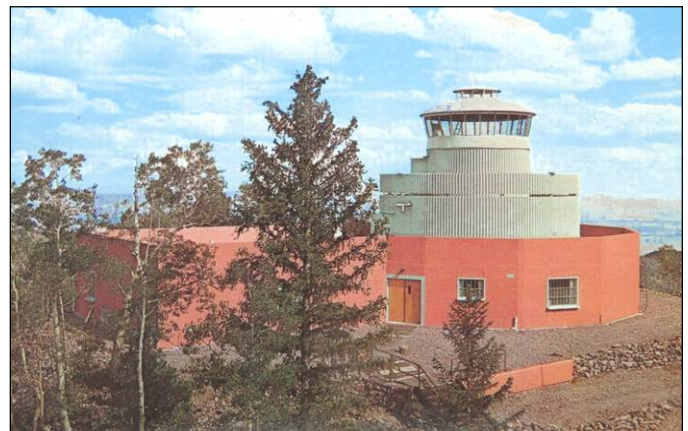
El Camino Restaurant was built by Nick and Virginia Smallridge in 1963 and operated by them for 30 years. It has changed little over the years and remains as Socorro's enduring eatery.

New Mexico Tech

(1960s: New Mexico Institute of Mining and Technology, NMIMT)



The original research building at New Mexico Tech has been replaced by a new, more modern building



Postcard of Langmuir Lab atop South Baldy, a premier lightning research facility.

A Few Socorro Landmarks



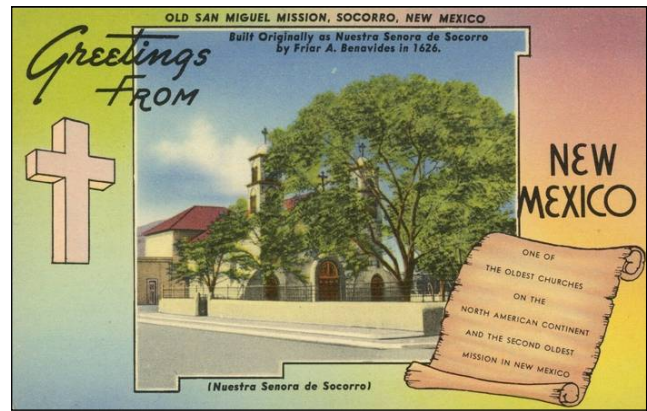
The Socorro County Courthouse in 1964. Built by the WPA in 1939, it still proudly serves the county.



The Socorro depot once was a popular passenger and freight stop on the AT&SF railroad (now BNSF).



Socorro General Hospital on Neel Ave. – where the Cottonwood Charter School is now located.



Socorro's San Miguel Mission church still remains one of the country's oldest active churches.

NEW BOOK —

The French In New Mexico

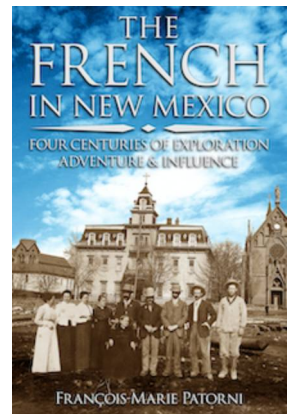
by author François-Marie Patorni

This new well researched book details many of the French families contributing to New Mexico's rich history with Chapter 24 dedicated to Socorro.

Some of the French families in Socorro prominent in our local history include Fraissinet, Chambon, Compredon, Duquet, DuBois, Grandjean and Longeumare. Many of San Miguel's priests were French including Fr. Bernard, Martin, Brun, Truchard and Labreche

In this first history of the French in New Mexico, the author chronicles the lives of French-speaking people who came mainly from France, Canada, Switzerland, Belgium, Africa, and the Caribbean Islands. The book traces their presence from the 1500s to present times. It tells stories of people from all walks of life, placing them in their historical and cultural context, pointing to more

detailed readings and further research. What is now New Mexico was for centuries at the limit of the world known to Europeans. This book is offered as a contribution to the cultural resurrection of the French in New Mexico. It is for the thousands of New Mexicans who share a French ancestry. It is also for their distant cousins who remained in their original lands. And beyond direct family ties, it is for all those interested in the multicultural aspects of New Mexico's history and society.



The book contains 432 pages with 100 photographs, illustrations and maps. It sells for \$24.95 and can be ordered from:

<https://frenchinnewmexico.com>

or email to fmpatorni@earthlink.net

LOST CIVILIZATIONS



One of the mysteries of our planet are the ruins of ancient cities and civilizations that once thrived, abruptly came to an end, and her people that vanished without a trace. Lost civilizations in the Americas are some of the most intriguing and mysterious.

Chaco Canyon was once home to thousands of ancestral puebloan people living in over a dozen large pueblos and other complexes beginning about 850 A.D. Chaco began an unknown decline around 1150 and completely abandoned by 1250.

Mesa Verde was home to a complex of small pueblos around 600 A.D. After 1150, the influx of Chacoan people triggered a huge building phase, including the now famous cliff dwellings. However, by the late 1200s, Mesa Verde, too, had been quickly and totally abandoned.

In both cases, abandonment has been cited as due to drought, over population, exhausted local resources, disease and warfare. Researchers have no consensus on the dominant causes of the collapse and thus abandonment remains a mystery to this day.

The Mayan Empire gets top billing for crumbling empires and a vanishing civilization in both history and lore. Mayan cities were the largest in the Americas at the time.

Tikal was a bustling pyramid filled city-state in the northern Guatemalan jungle. It flourished from 600 to 900 A.D. when the Mayan civilization mysteriously collapsed. Common explanations of Tikal's downfall are overpopulation, depleting the region's resources, civil unrest, and of course the ever present excuses of drought, disease and warfare.

Improvements in archaeology, like any discipline, is due to advancing technologies. DNA and chemical analysis are some of these new tools. These tools, being used by biologists from the University of Cincinnati, have perhaps answered the primary reason why the plazas and temples of Tikal and other Mayan cities were suddenly left empty.



Chaco Canyon consisted of a dozen "cities" and other complexes that mysteriously ended around 1150 A.D.



The Mayan city of Tikal, once sporting perhaps 120,000 people, was abruptly abandoned by 900 A.D.

Tikal, like all Mayan cities, built reservoirs to store water for drinking, cooking, washing and irrigation to support their populations. Spectrometry was used to test the chemical composition of the sediments in the Tikal reservoirs finding dangerous levels of mercury.

Many Mayan cities were decorated with brightly painted walls and murals. The bright red paints were made with poisonous cinnabar containing mercury. Rains would leach the mercury from the paint and run into the reservoirs. After several centuries, the mercury content of the water had reached very dangerous levels.

High levels of phosphates were also detected, caused by feces and other organic material in the water supply. Phosphate is a nutrient for green algae. Some of the algae in the reservoir sediments were at toxic levels. As the green algae overwhelmed the reservoirs, it became unsightly

with a pungent odor, obvious it was unsafe to use. Even with modern pumps, filters, and chemicals, it's very difficult to rid a body of water of green algae.

Carbon dating and other methods show the mercury, phosphates and toxic levels of algae were reached at Tikal around 850 A.D.

Simply put, Tikal's foul water supply became undrinkable and deadly, causing the people to quickly abandon their beloved city and scatter in search of water. Tikal was abandoned by 900 A.D.

Other Mayan cities will be tested in the near future, expecting similar tainted results. It appears the combination of dry weather, dwindling food supplies **and toxic water** causing civil unrest may have caused the collapse of the Mayan empire.

Do You Remember . . . These Once Popular Businesses?

Many businesses have come and gone in our life times – some have brought a tear to our eye that once were a part of Americana. Some businesses have vanished due to changes in our society and technology, or failed to adapt to the digital age. Others expanded across the country so quickly, they simply got buried in massive debt. Here's some of the business most of us probably recall that are no more, and the cause of their demise.

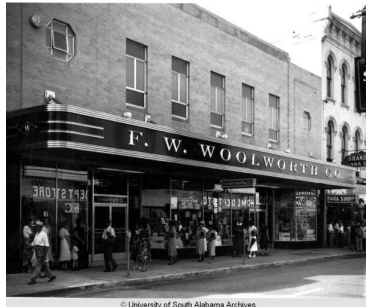
E.F. HUTTON

Founded in 1904 was once the second largest brokerage house in America. "When E.F. Hutton talks, people listen." Remember that? They hit hard times in 1987 when they were found guilty of laundering money for the Patriarca crime family (Boston mafia) followed by the market crash that triggered massive trading losses and bad margin calls. By the end of the year, Hutton had lost \$76 million and on the verge of total collapse. Several mergers attempted to save the company. What's left of their accounts today are now part of CitiCorp Inc., but the Hutton brand is long gone.



WOOLWORTH'S

was founded in 1879 by **Frank Winfield Woolworth** and hence the full name, "F.W. Woolworth Co." He built stores in the downtown areas of about every city and town in America. It thrived for decades as America's "five and dime" store and famous fountain counter with their yummy malts and shakes.



Business began to wane in the 1960s with the population shift out of the cities and the growth of suburban shopping centers, taking customers away from downtown businesses. Woolworth's expanded into other businesses located in the new shopping centers, such as Kinney Shoes. This rapid expansion and debt was the company's undoing. By 1997, all Woolworth's stores had closed. The only remnant of the retail giant today are their Foot Locker stores.

MCI

MCI was once the biggest name in the telephone and discount long-distance industry. MCI acquired many smaller providers making it number one, but also placed it in heavy debt. An elaborate accounting fraud to disguise it's mounting debt was discovered in 2002, forcing MCI to declare bankruptcy. MCI was acquired by Verizon in 2006.

HOWARD JOHNSON was a national chain of motor lodges and restaurants along the nation's highways. Many were bypassed by the Interstate Highways in the 1950-70s. Marriot Hotels purchased the hotel and motel chain in 1979, in many cases razing the motels for the real estate and building new hotels and restaurants in more favorable locations and along the Interstates. Since 2006, these hotels are now part of the Wyndham Hotel chain. Many old Howard Johnson motels are now operated as Econo Lodge motels.



Howard Johnson restaurants with its distinctive "steeple" and orange roof.

Howard Johnson restaurants suffered a similar fate. Once one of America's favorite eateries, it began to suffer in the 1960s from being isolated from the Interstate highways. They also lost many customers by remaining a segregated restaurant in many areas. A failure to update the 1950s restaurant and a stale menu made matters worse. When Marriot Hotels purchased the company in 1979, many of the nearly 1,100 restaurants were converted to Big Boy or Roy Rogers restaurants. The others were simply neglected, many being purchased by the managers with little franchise support until they began to close one by one.

Today, only one Howard Johnson restaurant remains, in Lake George, New York. The Howard Johnson restaurant on Lomas Blvd. in Albuquerque was one of the last to close.

Continued next page

STANDARD OIL was the dominant oil company in America that made **John D. Rockefeller** a very, very rich man. In 1911, the company was found guilty of unfair pricing practices against its competitors and violating anti-trust laws. Over the years, various legal tactics were used to break up the company's monopoly. Today, Chevron, Exxon, Mobil and Conoco are the remnants of the original Standard Oil Company empire.



SEARS was the world's largest retail store. They invented catalog buying, selling about everything you could imagine from corsets to stoves, shipped to your home. Several "Sears homes," built from kits, are in Socorro. It remained America's largest retail store until 1989 when Walmart grabbed the title and thereafter threatened by Target, Amazon and online stores. All the while, Sears stagnated, management did nothing to address the growing competition. Instead, they spent \$millions expanding into unsuccessful financial and insurance markets, even buying fledgling K-Mart. The company has been forced to close the majority of their stores and still hugely in debt. Though recently introducing online sales, they are a decade too late. Their survival is uncertain.



The ever popular Sears catalogs were published well over 100 years.



CIRCUIT CITY was the place to go for televisions, stereos and boom boxes. Then came **Best Buy** in the 1990s with better products, more attractive stores and well-trained sales people. Circuit City responded by replacing thousands of their higher paid experienced sales staff with younger minimum wage workers. Customers soon complained of the lack of knowledge of their skeleton sales force and the impersonal stores. In 2008, sales hit bottom and Circuit City filed for bankruptcy and closed their stores. **CompUSA** suffered a similar fate.

KODAK was the largest film company in the world. At one time, they sold 85% of the world's films, cameras, darkroom equipment, chemicals, and commercial developing systems. Kodak failed to keep up with the digital revolution and quickly left in the dust by Nikon, Canon and other high resolution digital cameras and systems. While they spent \$millions trying to adapt to digital technologies, they were simply too late entering the market and ceased most operations and declared bankruptcy in 2012. They still exist producing specialized films for X-ray machines and science, but just a fraction of the size of this once mega-company.



POLAROID patented their instant film cameras in 1937, quickly capturing and holding their niche in the market with virtually no competition. Remember the Polaroid Land cameras? - millions were sold. However, like Kodak, they failed to recognize the impact of digital cameras, a technology easily adapted to their instant print products, but failed to do so. They declared bankruptcy in 2001 and assets sold off. A new company purchased the name to produce a new generation of Polaroid digital cameras in 2017.



BLOCKBUSTER VIDEO, founded 1985, covered the country with over 9,000 stores and 84,000 employees by 2004. They rented home videos and games

when just about everyone had a VCR or DVD player. Business was booming. Blockbuster expanded by opening 2,000 stores in Europe and Australia.

Then came the internet, NetFlix, and other streaming video services. People began to chuck their bulky VCRs and tapes to favor their computers or digital TVs for home entertainment. To enter the digital age, Blockbuster was offered to buy Netflix for \$50 million, but the Board rejected the buy. Oops! **Netflix** now serves 190 countries with 2019 sales of \$2.6 billion. Oops! Blockbuster simply failed to keep up with the digital trends and disappeared overnight, including the store in Socorro. Only one store is left with the Blockbuster name – in Bend, Oregon.

QUIZNOS began in Denver in 1981 and quickly expanded as a popular sub sandwich and pizza quick-stop restaurant. By 2007, the chain had 5,000 locations, including several in Albuquerque. This rapid expansion took a beating in the 2008 recession, followed by changes in ownership, mounting debt, and management problems. Filing for bankruptcy in 2014, only about 400 Quiznos remains today. There are no Quiznos Subs left in New Mexico.



BORDERS was a book and music store with locations all over the world, including Albuquerque. Their rapid expansion and nearly \$1 billion debt, combined with their failure to adapt to digital and online books was their demise. All locations were closed with their million plus customer base sold to Barnes & Nobel for a paltry \$13.9 million.



COMPAQ was the largest seller of personal computers in the world in the 1980s and 1990s. Sales began to wane with cheaper PCs being offered by Dell and overseas based competition. HP purchased the company in 2002 for \$25 billion. HP continued the Compaq brand until discontinued in 2013.



The **Osborne** and **Kaypro** CP/M based PCs suffered a similar fate from foreign competition and failure to use the popular IBM PC operating system.

COMMODORE was another major computer company that went bankrupt in 1994. It failed to keep up with the rapidly changing innovations of the PC and Apple Mac desktop computers, such as color graphics and a more user friendly operating system, leaving their customers in the computer stone age.



LONG GONE AIRLINES

The oldest airline in the world still operating is **Koninklijke Luchtvaart Maatschappij**, better known by their initials: **KLM** (thankfully!). This is their centennial anniversary, with flights beginning in 1920 from Amsterdam. Australia's **Qantas Air** is also celebrating 100 years of service this year. Other famous early airlines have not been so lucky.

Eastern Airlines was one of the top four American airlines, taking to the skies in 1926. For decades, they provided flights between many east coast cities. Deregulation in 1978 halted government control of routes and fares – spawning a host of smaller and cheaper commuter airlines such as Mesa Air, Jet Blue and America West. Deregulation, rising fuel costs, high interest rates, along with mismanagement and a prolonged labor strike, crippled the airline. Eastern ran out of money in 1991 and ceased operations. **Northwest Airlines, Midway Airlines, America West** and others also filed for bankruptcy in 1991 – a very bad year for the country's legacy fleet of airlines.



Pan American (Pan Am) was one of the most recognized airlines in the world since their 1927 debut. They were the first to serve Hawaii, Pacific, and Asian destinations with their luxurious flying hotels – their famous "China Clippers" 1930–1950s. Deregulation, company mismanagement and rising fuel costs were blamed for their shutdown, also in 1991. Some Pan Am planes and routes were purchased by **Delta Airlines**, but the famous airline was no more.



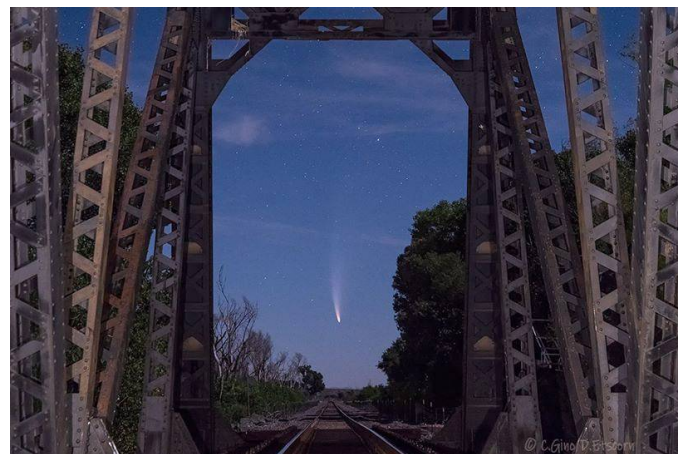
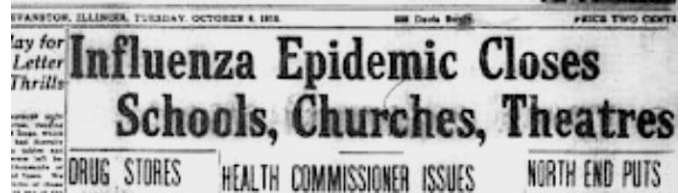
Brannif Airlines began in 1928 serving midwest and southwest destinations. In 1970, routes were expanded to Europe and Asia with a fleet of new Boeing 747s. By 1982, the effects of deregulation, high fuel costs, lower fares and rising credit card rates took its toll. Brannif ceased air operations in May 1982.



Deregulation also caused the failure of Howard Hughes' **TWA** and other airlines 1990-2000s.

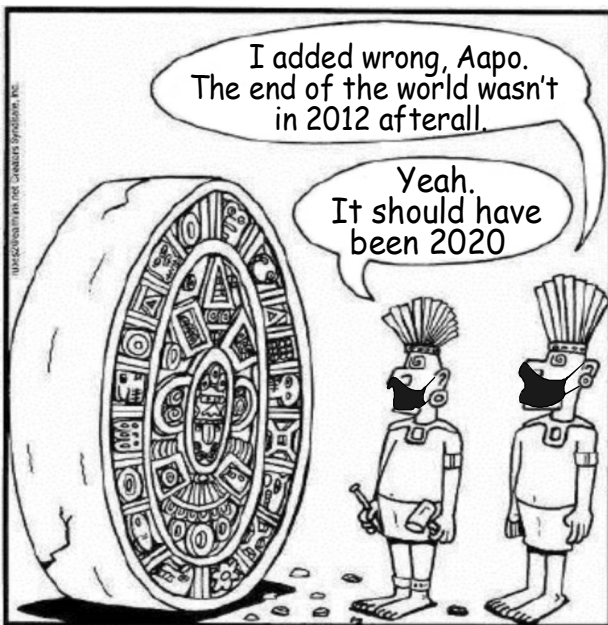
Images from the 1918 Epidemic – Little Has Changed!

Wear those face masks! 1918 photos shows the order to wear face masks in public and at work is nothing new. Schools, churches, and theaters closed – just like today. While the exact cause of spread of the Spanish Flu was not known at the time, the precautions were the same as today.



A great and unique photo of comet **NEOWISE** recently posted on [Facebook](#) as viewed through the old railroad trestle at San Marcial. Photo taken by Magdalena Ridge Observatory staff members Colleen Gino and Dylan Etscorn before sunrise on July 10, 2020. An absolutely fantastic photo.

The comet was visible to the naked eye for about a week in early morning before sunrise, and near the Big Dipper in early evening – at least when there were no clouds!!!



AUGUST 2020

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
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2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

August 2020 is very special and you'll never see another like it.
This month has: 5 Sundays
5 Mondays
5 Saturdays

This only occurs once every 823 years. We have no idea who figured that out.