



Socorro County Historical Society

Post Office Box 923
Socorro, New Mexico 87801

MEMBERSHIP NEWS • APRIL 2009

SCHS Board Meetings:

Socorro County Historical Society meets on the **2nd Tuesday of each month** at 7:00 p.m. All members are welcome to attend.

The Next Board Meeting ...

will be held on **Tuesday, April 14, 2009 at 7:00 pm** at the Hammel Museum.

All Society members are invited to attend our Board meetings.

Next Meeting at the Brewery

With the weather warming up, the next Board meeting will be held in the Hammel Museum until late autumn.

During the colder winter months, Board meetings are held on the New Mexico Tech campus in the Mineral Museum conference room. Thanks Robert Eveleth for providing our winter home (and the heat!).

Our electronic Newsletter

About 80% of the members of the Socorro County Historical Society now have email. If you would prefer to receive the newsletter at a different address than where you received this one, or if you have something to contribute, please let the Secretary know
(Paul Harden, na5n@zianet.com).

Hammel Museum Update

The Board of Directors wish we had better news on getting the collapsed wall at the Hammel Museum repaired. On the other hand, we are making positive progress – just seemingly very slow.

Some avenues of funding sources we have explored, for which we were given fairly high hopes of success, have either fallen through or placed on an indefinite hold. These were primarily government grants or assistance. Government entities are also feeling the current economic down turn from falling tax revenues and forced budget cutbacks. With everyone's coffers running low, many funding requests, such as ours, have been rejected or been asked to resubmit at a later time.

Some future prospects for grants or other sources of funding require us to have certain percentages of the repair costs already on-hand prior to making their grant or contribution. For this reason, it is important for us to build up our repair fund to meet these requirements.

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The collapsed wall on the Hammel Museum

Museum Repair (from page 1)

Thanks to a couple of sizable donations, our repair account is slowly growing. The Burlington Northern and Santa Fe (BNSF) railroad contributed \$5,000 for the wall repair. Another \$1,000 donation was made to the Society by the family of one of our own members. A special thank you for both of these contributions, for which the Society is very grateful.

Matching Fund proposal

Another Society member has made a matching fund offer. They will match dollar-for-dollar any contributions to the repair fund up to \$5,000. This, indeed, is a gracious gift. Many thanks for this offer.

If you are in a position to contribute \$50 or \$100 to the repair fund, this will allow the Society to double the amount. Donations can be sent to the Society's Treasurer at:

**Socorro County Historical Society
Kay Brower, Treasurer
P. O. Box 923
Socorro, NM 87801**

While we would certainly like to recognize those members who assist the Society in our repair program, all contributions will be considered anonymous unless otherwise directed.

Future Plans

An article will shortly be submitted to the Socorro Defensor Chieftain and Mountain Mail on the repair update and the matching fund offer. Hopefully, this will generate some support for contributions by the community, and perhaps as well to recruit some new Society members. We do need some new blood!

We are hoping this campaign will build up the repair fund to about \$10,000. This will be a good start when we re-apply for a couple of government grants.

Secondly, with a little "working capital," this will also put us in a position to go out on bids with contractors to at least begin the first phase of the repair – to structurally stabilize the building wall. Replacing the rock facade can be performed at a later time. This may allow us to reduce the original \$30,000+ repair estimate.

The Board is also considering some special fund raising activities beyond our normal publication sales. The problem, of course, is the amount of money that needs to be raised compared to the dollar or two profit per item realized for most fund raising ideas. We need to think big and we have a couple of good prospective ideas. If you have any fund raising ideas, please let one of the Board members know.

Annual Meeting & Banquet

The next annual meeting of the Socorro County Historical Society is coming up soon.

It is tentatively scheduled for Saturday evening, May 23, 2009 at Rancher's Steakhouse. We are checking now to ensure this does not conflict with any major activities in Socorro or at Rancher's. Most members who attended last year seemed to enjoy the buffet style dinner, for which we will strive for again with at least two choices for the main meal. It should be noted that Rancher's Steakhouse has always worked with us well for our annual banquet. Jess Landers and David Jones at Rancher's Steakhouse, along with Supermart, have also always been excellent donors and supporters for our annual Oktoberfest.

If you would like to join the Board, or run for President, please let the Secretary know. Our

president, Robert Eveleth, has a very ambitious schedule of writing over 20 detailed historical and mining papers for New Mexico Tech and Bureau of Mines and Mineral Resources prior to his retirement next year. Robert has expressed his concern on how much free time this allows him to conduct some of the Society's business, especially the time consuming aspects of the museum repair. He would like to be relieved as the Society President, at least temporarily, for these extra work demands – though he is willing to continue to serve if no replacement can be found. Please consider serving as president for one year, or joining our Board.

Details on the dinner, the subject of the talk, and election of officers, will be finalized at the next Board meeting and reported in the next newsletter.

From the Mailbag . . . Odds & Ends of possible interest

Socorro Surgeon Dr. Parvis

As secretary of the Society, you get mail or email from people doing research on some aspect of Socorro history or, often, genealogical research.

A couple of months ago, one such request was sent to our former secretary, Barbara Dubois, which was forwarded to me. It turned out to be quite interesting. The request was from Catherine Westergaard. She does research for the City of Tucson, AZ on historical buildings slated for restoration. One such building was an old medical building, built in the early 1900s, by a Dr. Whitehill, originally from Silver City, NM.

Therein opened a mystery. According to her research from Tucson newspapers, Dr. Whitehill, and his friend *Dr. Parvis of Socorro*, went to Europe in 1914 to hunt in Bavaria and were never heard from again.

I must admit, I have had very little luck finding information on Socorro's Dr. Parvis in the past. I know he arrived in Socorro and built a hospital on south California Street in the early 1900s. I have found few reference in old Socorro Chieftains; ads for his surgery practice stop in the 1920s, even though his hospital operated under the Parvis name until the early 1950s. I assumed Dr. Parvis left Socorro for greener pastures. Now, perhaps, his 1914 disappearance might answer what happened to this short-lived but famous Socorro surgeon. Unfortunately, there are almost no known issues of the Chieftain for the year 1914 to see what was reported of his disappearance locally.

My first clue was finding a short biography of Dr. Parvis in Twitchell's "Leading Facts of New Mexico History." Twitchell stated he graduated with honors from John Hopkins University Medical School in 1905; in 1907-1908, he attended the University of London, graduating as a surgeon. For the next two years, he served as a surgeon in Europe for the U. S. Army.

He arrived in Socorro and established his surgical practice and hospital in 1911. Twitchell states Dr. Parvis had become a very well known surgeon with patients coming to his Socorro hospital from across the southwest. Twitchell makes it very clear he was alive and well in Socorro when he penned his book in 1917. He clearly returned from Europe in 1914. I reported these facts to Ms. Westergaard. Was she perhaps mistaken about the date of his disappearance?



*Photo (color postcard), Paul Harden collection
The Parvis Hospital in the early 1920s. It stood where Cooney's Package Liquors now stands.*

Her subsequent research found that Dr. Whitehill sold his medical building in Tucson in 1914 and returned to Silver City, NM. The confusion was the spelling of his name being "Whitehall," not Whitehill, on the deed to the Tucson property.

Apparently, doctors Whitehill and Parvis did have an unexplained extended stay in Bavaria, leading some to think they had gone missing. Their disappearance was reported in the Tuscon paper, but their eventual return was not. With no Chieftain's for 1914, it is not known if a parallel story ran locally. The reasons behind their delayed return and assumed demise remains a mystery.

However, the mystery does continue. If Dr. Parvis did return in 1914, why did he leave Socorro a few years later?

I contacted the NM Surgical Society, which indeed had records of Dr. Parvis. He was listed as dying on May 27, 1924 in Bernalillo. From the date of death, I was able to find an extensive obituary and article in the Socorro Chieftain entitled, "Dr. Parvis Passes Away; Socorro Mourns Loss of Prominent Physician."

The article explains Dr. Parvis took sick about May 15, 1924 with the flu. Upon developing sharp stomach pains, he went to Presbyterian Hospital in Albuquerque on May 21 to seek other advice. They diagnosed Dr. Parvis as having appendicitis and operated that evening. The surgery, not relieving his pain, ordered a second surgery a few days later.

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Dr. Parvis (cont)

In the second operation, surgeons discovered he had an abscessed liver in an advanced stage. In spite of efforts to save his life, Dr. Parvis succumbed to his failed liver on May 24th, only a week and half after first feeling ill.

Dr. William Parvis was born in Evanston, IL on November 10, 1881. Thus, he was only 42 years old when he died. He was unmarried, living with his mother in Socorro whom he brought here from Illinois. He was buried at the Socorro Protestant Cemetery. The fact that his hospital operated under his name for decades after his death is a testimony to the reputation earned by Dr. Parvis in his life – cut so short.

Museums of New Mexico 100 Years Old

(From *La Cronica, Historical Society of NM*) In February 1909, the New Mexico Territorial Legislature passed the law establishing the Museum of New Mexico (MNM), designating the Palace of the Governors on the Santa Fe plaza as its home. After statehood, MNM became part of the Department of Cultural Affairs, today considered to be the nation's largest system of state-run museums, state monuments, art museums and other cultural programs.

In 2009, MNM marks its 100th anniversary with 100 special exhibitions and events planned throughout the state. A couple of these activities will be held at El Camino Real International Heritage Center, one of the state monuments.

The cornerstone of the celebration will be the grand opening on Memorial Day weekend of the New Mexico History Museum, built behind the Palace of the Governors.

It is worthy to note that the Historical Society of New Mexico was formed in 1859, predating MNM by 50 years.

For more information on the various special activities of Museums of New Mexico, see:
<http://www.museumofnewmexico.org>

New SCHS Website

Socorro County Historical Society

[Museum](#)

[Tours](#)

[Events](#)

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[Members](#)



Neal Ave & 6th St.
Socorro NM

Open 9 to 12 noon
1st Sat of the month

Private Tours
(575) 835-3183

Hammel Museum, a retired brewery, is SCHS' headquarters. Brewmasters Jakob Hammel and Eberhard Anheuser emigrated together from Bavaria in the mid-19th century and eventually established separate breweries. Jacob Hammel set up business in Illinois in about 1870. Jacob's son, William G. Hammel, came to Socorro in 1882 for reasons of health, and in 1886 the building pictured above was constructed to house the Illinois Brewery. The brewery produced beer until 1908, when it was converted into production. After ratification of the Volstead Act the brewery was converted to a soft drink bottling plant and ice house. Commercial brewing in Socorro was discontinued until the recent opening of the Socorro Springs Brewing Co. The Hammel Museum retains much of the machinery and equipment of the brewery and the ice plant. It also houses a collection of historical exhibits and artifacts related to ranching, mining, railroading, and social history. [Read more](#).

The **Socorro County Historical Society** has a new website. It is located at:
<http://www.socorrohistory.org>

This website is Kay Brower's Christmas gift from daughter Karen. Karen registered the domain name (socorrohistory.org) and built the site for us. Though in its infancy, the basics are there and Karen is ready to add anything we'd like or allow SCHS members to update the site. This is a marvelous Christmas gift to Kay, and of course, the entire Society. Many thanks, Karen.

Mother Elise Brower was not ignored; she, too, got her own website for Socorro's women's choral group, Las Cantantes. It is located at:
<http://lascantantes.net>

There is a nice photo of the Las Cantantes members. Recognize anybody?