

# Socorro County Historical Society

Post Office Box 923  
Socorro, New Mexico 87801

MEMBERSHIP NEWS • APRIL 2010

## SCHS Board Meetings:

Socorro County Historical Society meets on the **2nd Tuesday of each month** at 7:00 p.m.

**The Next Board Meeting** will be the annual meeting to be held on Friday, April 30 at Rancher's Steakhouse.

**The following Board meeting** will be held on Tuesday, **May 11, 2010** at 7:00 p.m. at the Hammel Museum.

**All Society members are invited to attend Board meetings.**

## SCHS ANNUAL MEETING & BANQUET

Friday Evening  
**APRIL 30, 2010**  
RANCHER'S STEAKHOUSE  
Banquet Room

6:00 pm – Social Hour

7:00 pm – Banquet Dinner

8:00 pm – Business Meeting

Election of Officers

Guest of Honor:

*Alex Ulibarri*

Public Talk by Jon Spargo

*"Restoration of 2926"*

\$20 per person; open to the public  
Tickets available at the door

## Annual Meeting Friday, April 30, 2010

**The Annual Meeting and Banquet** for the Socorro County Historical Society will be held at Rancher's Steakhouse on Friday evening, April 30, 2010.

This year's date was moved to a bit earlier than past years to avoid the growing number of graduation activities in Socorro during the month of May. We hope you find the date more convenient than in the past and hope you plan to attend.

**Social Hour.** Activities begin at 6:00 p.m. with a no-host bar in the banquet room to give all members an opportunity to renew friendships and welcome our guests.

**Dinner** will be served at 7:00 p.m. This year's entrees will consist of your choice of top sirloin steak or chicken breast with mushroom sauce from the Rancher's Steakhouse grill, complimented with potatoes, vegetable mix, bread, condiments and desert.

**The Annual Business Meeting** will be held directly following dinner, about 8:00 p.m. SCHS President Robert Eveleth will review the activities of the Society and the Hammel Museum over the past year, plans for the upcoming year, and conduct the election of officers.

**Special Presentation.** A special presentation of a plaque will be given to **Alex Ulibarri** to honor his many years of service to the Hammel Brewery. Alex served as Caretaker for the Illinois Brewing Company

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## Annual Meeting (con't)

from 1955 through 1986, the year the Hammel family transferred custodianship of the historic brewery building to the Socorro County Historical Society. He was the last employee of the Hammel Brewery. The plaque honoring Mr. Ulibarri will be placed in the museum as a lasting honor of his service. Mr. Ulibarri will be our guest of honor at this year's banquet, accompanied by members of his family.

### Public Talk: Steam Locomotive 2926.

This year's public talk will be by Socorro Train Gang and SCHS Board member Jon Spargo on the restoration of Santa Fe steam locomotive engine number 2926. Spargo is also a member of the New Mexico Steam Locomotive and Railroad Historical Society (NMSLRH). This organization was formed for the express purpose of restoring the massive steam locomotive to full operational service.

You probably know engine 2926 – it sat for years in the small Albuquerque park near I-40 and 4th Street. In June 2000, the locomotive engine and tender car was towed from the park to the restoration site.

Restoration of the locomotive is being conducted strictly by volunteers, who have thus far invested thousands of hours completely rebuilding the engine and tender. Spargo's presentation of the restoration effort includes numerous photographs of the origination engine and the restoration effort.

It is the goal of NMSLRH to return the steam locomotive to full operational service as an excursion train. 2926 is history in the making, and Spargo will explain some of the plans to see the locomotive rolling along the Santa Fe tracks once again, including possible visits to Socorro.

Whether you're a railroad buff or not, you'll find this unique project to restore 2926 informative and interesting.



Santa Fe engine 2926 in its heyday.



2926 today – showing the extensive work required to the massive boiler

**Come join the fun** Friday evening, April 30, at Rancher's Steakhouse for our Annual Meeting and Banquet. The public is invited, so bring a guest.

Dinner tickets are \$20 per person and have been mailed to SCHS members. Tickets for guests or the public will be available at the door.

## Repairing the Brewery Floor

The floor in the south wing of the brewery has been in poor shape for years. The old inferior cement has cracked and crumbled, making use of the rooms unsafe. During the wall repair, the crumbling foundation and footings were rebuilt, but not the flooring.

Cost to remove the old cement and pour a new floor was estimated in the thousands of dollars. Building a wood floor over the old cement had similar costs. The cracked and uneven floor made other covering methods impractical.

An Albuquerque contractor offered a cost effective alternative. The technique involved pumping a special epoxy-cement over the old concrete floor. This compound, being

quite “soupy” when applied, allows it to be self leveling and firmly bonds to the old surface.

The \$1,300 expense was approved at the last Board meeting and the work was done on Monday, April 19. The result is magnificent – a nice, new, smooth and level durable cement floor for years of service.

This area is being reworked for future displays and to enhance the museum building. Much of the work is being done by the Socorro Train Gang. The new floor is part of these improvements, and to provide a safe walking surface for our visitors.

*Photos courtesy Paul Harden & Jon Spargo*



**A sample of the cracked and crumbling floor on the south wing of the brewery.**



**The special cement was pumped onto the brewery floor by workers and allowed to settle.**



**The new flooring compound self leveled to a smooth surface as it was allowed to dry.**



**After the cement dried, the new floor is strong, smooth, and ready for years of service.**

# Ye Ole Beer Vat

Once upon a time, there was a grand ole beer vat, or perhaps a mash vat, that sat in the corner of the Illinois Brewing Company building. In the days before Prohibition, no doubt the large wooden vat held countless gallons of tasty Socorro-brewed beer. It is not known if it was used after Prohibition, though it remained intact in the brewery until the 1980s.

When the SCHS acquired the Hammel Brewery, extensive remodeling was performed. Photos of the reconstruction shows the gallant vat still resting in her corner, about where the stairways to the second floor were later built. At that time, the vat was disassembled to make room for the stairway construction, each piece of wood meticulously numbered. The jig-saw of parts has been in storage ever since.

Last month, the Socorro Train Gang asked if they could rebuild the vat as a museum display. Though the wooden staves were numbered, it was still quite a challenge getting all the pieces back together with some order of fit.

The vat is huge, about six-feet tall. It is now located on the second story in the north section of the brewery. Due to it's 200-300 pound weight, it is not likely going anywhere soon.

It is appropriate that the historic beer vat has been reunited with the Hammel museum where it stood 100 years ago. Perhaps Alex Ulibarri, former Hammel Brewery caretaker, can fill us in on some details.

Upon searching the internet, it also appears beer vats of this size are becoming quite rare – most were cut up and converted to hot tubs in the hippy and Mother Earth days.

I think we'll keep ours intact!



This 1980s photo of the Hammel Museum reconstruction shows the vat on the ground floor where it had been for years.

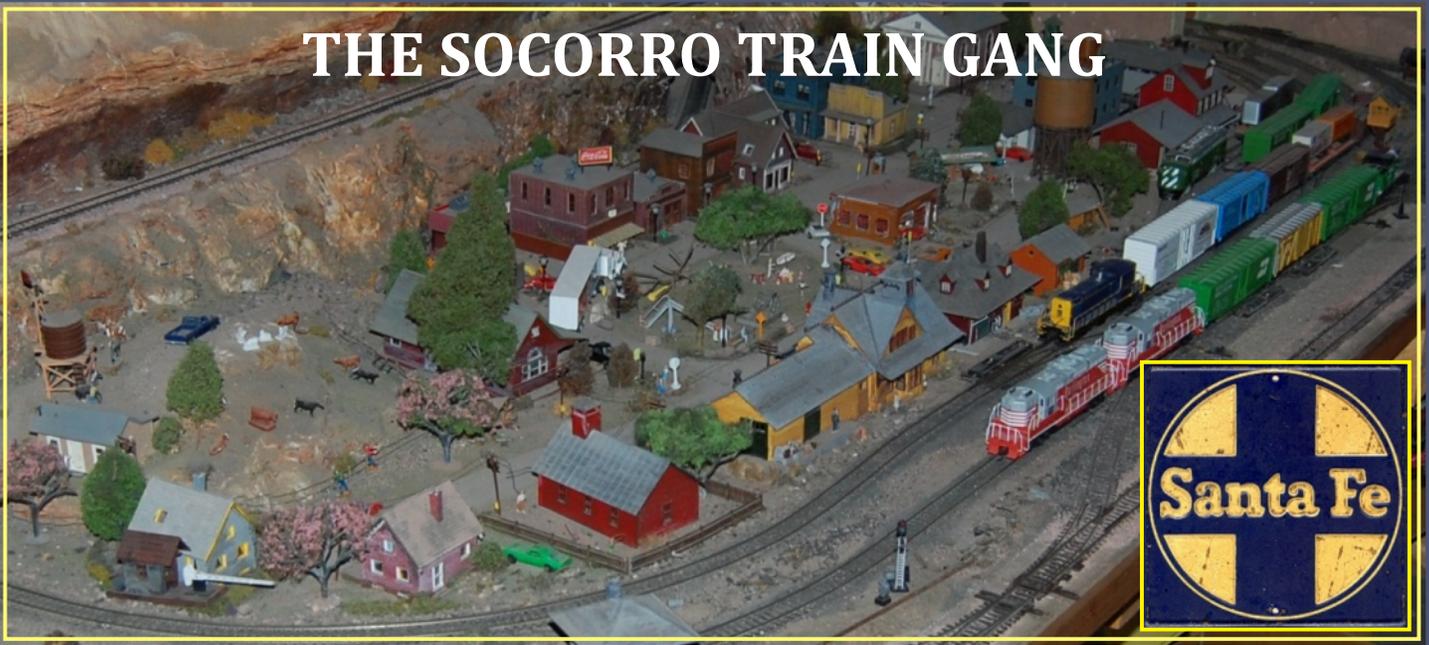


The beer vat today – after being rebuilt by the Socorro Train Gang. Some “fine tuning” is still needed!



A beer and wine barrel maker, or cooper, was an artisan skill for years. Like the breweries, most cooperages also vanished during Prohibition.

# THE SOCORRO TRAIN GANG



**The Socorro Train Gang** moved into the second floor of the Hammel Museum around 1986. Since that time, they have built several remarkable model railroads. Mountains, tunnels, bridges, small towns, and of course plenty of engines and rolling stock that are amazingly “life like.” Not only are their interest and hobby to build model trains, but to learn and preserve railroad history, and share it with others.

Oddly, most railroad companies have done little to preserve their own history; it is train gang clubs and rail fans that keeps the history alive.

The model railroads “upstairs” are always popular with our visitors during our open houses and special events such as Oktoberfest.

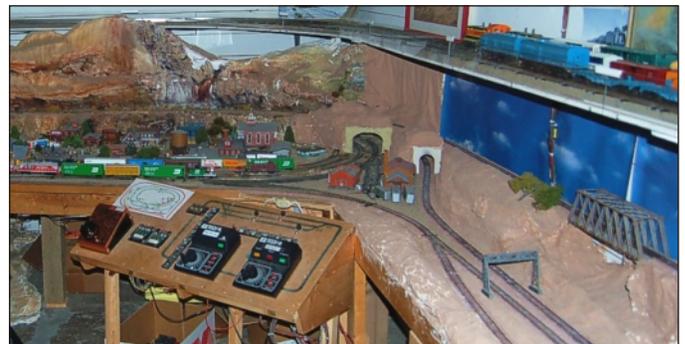
However, often the Socorro Train Gang goes unrecognized for their years of contributions to the Hammel Museum and the Society. Two train gang members, Roy Heatwole and Jon Spargo, also serve on the Board of Directors of SCHS.

The train gang often mans the Museum open houses on the first Saturday of the month. They have performed many improvements to the museum such as adding lighting and painting. They have often volunteered to perform other maintenance work to the building. In this newsletter alone, the train gang is remodeling the ground floor for future displays, assisted in the floor repair, rebuilt the beer vat – not to mention presenting this year public talk at the Annual Banquet and Meeting.

The Socorro Train Gang has been an instrumental part of the museum. Their efforts, and at times hard work, are highly appreciated by the Society. Our sincere thanks to the Socorro Train Gang for your years of support to the Hammel Museum and Society.



Board member Roy Heatwole demonstrates the red “Christmas Train” at last year’s Oktoberfest.



Two views of the model trains on the second floor of the Hammel Museum.



*An Evening at ...  
Las Ollas*



**Elaine Marr** and **Elliot Moore** graciously opened their home to members of the Socorro County Historical Society and the American Association of University Women on Tuesday, April 13.

Their home, long called "Las Ollas," is a beautiful example of Spanish and Pueblo architecture. The original portions of the home go

back to the territorial era, and perhaps before, though the exact date is not known. The house was expanded and built in the pueblo style by George Cook in the early 1900s. The old colonial Spanish home, combined with the pueblo style and hand worked wood ceilings and fixtures, is an immaculate home that takes you back at least 100 years.

Our hosts provided handouts with the changing floor plan over the years with the history of the house and the uniqueness of each room.

In the early 1920s, George Cook was one of the first to bring water into Socorro from the springs now called Cook's Spring. Water was brought to Las Ollas and stored in a cistern, which is still part of the property and used a swimming pool.

Though long a beautiful home, the constant love and attention added by the present owners is very evident, every touch in perfect taste.

The SCHS and AAUW would like to thank Elaine Marr and Elliot Moore for their hospitality, and a very enjoyable tour of one of Socorro's beautiful historic homes.



A fair crowd enjoyed the personal tour of "Las Ollas," beautifully restored by Elaine Marr and Elliot Moore.



The men seemed to enjoy the warm, relaxing atmosphere of the living room.



They just don't make showers this ornate anymore.



The Spanish style sitting room makes you feel at home