

# Socorro County Historical Society

Post Office Box 923  
Socorro, New Mexico 87801

MEMBERSHIP NEWS • SEPT. 2009

## Special SCHS Annual Issue

### BUILDING REPAIR TO BEGIN

**Hammel Museum Collapsed Wall Repair  
Will Begin on October 5th – after Oktoberfest**

The Socorro County Historical Society Board of Directors are pleased to announce to all members that the **repair to the Hammel Museum will begin shortly**. This has been a long ordeal for the Board over the past year and a half.

The contractor and the repair was approved at the September Board meeting. Since then, the engineering drawings for the repair have been approved, the building permits issued, and the contractor – Accurate Construction Inc. – will begin the repair work on Monday, October 5, immediately following Oktoberfest on October 3.

#### History of the Repair

The west facing wall on the Society's Hammel Museum building suffered a major collapse on April 10, 2008. The rock facade fell into Sixth Street, exposing a large portion of the old adobe load bearing wall. Temporary repairs were made to stabilize the wall from further collapse.

A inspection by a structural engineer revealed the damage was more serious than it first appeared. Years of hidden water damage had caused an internal "melting" of the adobe – causing the rock facade to separate from the adobe and become free standing. The rock facade began to bow outward until it collapsed under its own weight.

The inspection also revealed the integrity of the adobe wall had been compromised. Cracks, melting, and compression revealed it was no longer capable of being a load bearing wall for supporting the weight of the second story of the brewery. Even the footing for this wall was crumbling. This load bearing wall will eventually fail, jeopardizing the entire south end of the building, including the possible collapse of the upper story.

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#### **SCHS Board Meetings:**

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

The next Board meeting will be Tuesday, Oct. 13, 2009.

All members are invited to attend our Board meetings and help the Society.

## Society News, con't.

Repairing the building *properly* was always the primary concern of the Board.

It should be noted that the south load bearing wall of the building is concrete blocks and rebar – evidently replacing the original adobe wall in years past, perhaps due to a similar fate. It is not known when this replacement occurred, but appears to have been in the 1950s or before.

The repair was a double-edged sword for the Board: the repair and how to fund it. Repairs involve replacing the entire crumbling adobe load bearing wall and footings, restoring the historic rock facade, preventing future internal water damage, and rerouting electrical service.

The initial estimates for these repairs was about \$34,000, well beyond the financial resources of the Society. The repair fund program was created.

Several Society members contributed to the repair fund from amounts of \$100 to \$1,000. Board member Kay Brower made a generous offer to match contributions, effectively doubling individual donations. These donations and matching funds were vital in building up the fund. The Board expresses our sincere appreciation to all members who were able to contribute to the repair fund.

Several grants were investigated and applied for. Unfortunately, with the current state of the economy, this proved to be unsuccessful with the notable exception of the Burlington Northern and Santa Fe (BNSF) Railroad, making a single \$5,000 contribution. Many thanks to BNSF for this repair grant.

At the Annual Membership Meeting in May, the membership present agreed to use some of the Society's emergency stock fund, at the time about \$22,000. At the June Board meeting, it was approved to use half of this source or \$11,000; by the July meeting, this had grown to \$12,000 due to market fluctuations and was sold and liquidated for the repair. This brought the repair fund to a respectable \$24,000 to begin negotiating with contractors. Quotes received still fell in the \$34,000 range, indicating we could fund the repair to the crucial load bearing wall with the rock facade to be funded and repaired at a later date.

Bruce Burnett of Accurate Construction proposed an alternative method for a full repair that would save about \$10,000 and close to our \$24,000 budget. Engineering drawings were presented at the August and September meeting and the Board approved the method and awarded the work to Accurate Construction.



**The collapsed wall at the Hammel Brewery, exposing the old adobe load bearing wall. Temporary repairs have stabilized the building corner strength. Note the concrete southern wall.**

This special method is known as “slip form rock wall construction.” The adobe wall will be removed, a new cement footing poured, and steel rebar placed. A wooden form, about two feet high, will be built for the length and width of the wall. The facade rocks will be placed inside the form, then filled with cement and wire braces and allowed to dry for 2-3 days.

The form is removed and raised to build the next two-foot section of the wall. This will be repeated until the full height of the wall has been built. By this method, a solid cement load bearing wall and the rock facade are essentially built in one step – a rather novel (and cost saving) technique.

The Board wishes to thank Bruce Burnett for this cost saving method and agreeing to perform the work within our repair budget. This leaves about a \$1,000 deficit which can be covered from our operating account or future donations.

All Board members were involved with applying for grants and working with contractors with Kay Brower carefully managing the repair and stock funds. Roy Heatwole and Jon Spargo were especially instrumental in working with the contractor on finding a suitable repair method within our present funding. Ray Senn, former owner of Socorro Engineering, was also very valuable to the Board in evaluating engineering proposals and explaining the pros and cons to the Board.

We thank all members for your support and patience – and hope you are as excited as we are in seeing the repair begin to preserve one of Socorro's most historic buildings.

## A Busy Year for the Society – and Plenty of Good News

*The Socorro County Historical Society has seemed to be somewhat dormant lately while much has gone on “behind the scenes” – especially related to the building repair. Below are a few other important activities from the minutes of recent Board meetings.*

### Annual Meeting

The annual membership meeting was held Friday, May 22 at Rancher’s Steakhouse. Attendance was light due to the persistent rain all day and the Socorro High School graduation on the same evening.

No nominations for officers were received from the membership. Those in attendance voted to keep the current Board Officers:

Robert Eveleth	President
Kay Brower	Treasurer
Paul Harden	Secretary

SCHS President Robert Eveleth presented a review of the Society over the past year and the status of the building repair efforts. The President pointed out that due to the light turnout, there was not a membership quorum and was opened for suggestions on how to proceed. Those present voiced their opinions on several important matters to give the Board direction for future actions.

### Society Money Fund & Museum Repair

Barbara Dubois proposed the Society’s \$20,000 stock fund be used for the repair fund. Others agreed as a legitimate emergency expense. This money was raised several years ago by various matching methods, spear-headed by Barbara DuBois, for building the new restroom, plumbing additions, and other improvements. The Board operates under the impression from our predecessors that this money could not be used without a general membership approval.

At the June Board meeting, Paul Harden proposed to commit half the value of the stock fund, or about \$10,000 at current market value. This motion was passed by the Board, bringing the repair fund to about \$21,000.

By the August Board meeting, the value of the stock fund had risen to about \$24,000. Kay Krehbiel proposed to sell half of the fund for the repair fund. The motion was passed by the Board; Treasurer Kay Brower executed the sale the following day, transferring \$12,000 to the repair fund, bringing the total to about \$24,000.

These recommendations by the membership

and action by the Board allowed the contract for the repair to be approved at the September Board meeting.

### The 2010 Annual Meeting

Another concern expressed by those in attendance at the annual meeting is how to improve attendance. Most felt the May annual meetings were in conflict with graduations.

The original 1974 SCHS by-laws state that the annual membership meeting “*shall be held each year in May.*” Conflicts with the recent growth in graduation activities has become very troublesome for the Society. The date chosen for this year was the only date available for the entire month of May, available only because of the Socorro High School graduation that evening, preventing many members from attending.

Based on membership recommendations, the Board proposed and passed a motion to hold next year’s annual meeting in March or April to avoid May’s graduation activities. This will require a change to the SCHS bylaws.

If you have a differing opinion on this change please express your concerns to a Board member.

At the last annual meeting, we did not meet the minimum number of dinners. Rancher’s Steakhouse honored the original price per plate, for which SCHS is extremely grateful.

### The Hammel Museum Break In

The Hammel Museum was broken into in early August. The alarm sounded and the police responded, apprehending and arresting NMT student Sepp Fuierer. The front door was damaged during the break in.

Mr. Fuierer attended the August Board meeting and read a letter of apology and explained his actions. It was basically a 21st birthday celebration that got a little out of hand. He and some friends thought they were entering an abandoned building and had no intent on stealing anything or vandalizing the property. An inspection of the building revealed nothing was stolen or damaged except the front door latch and lock.

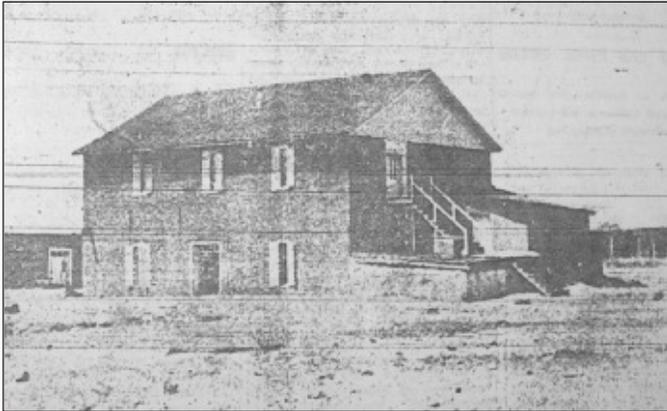
Mr. Fuierer offered to pay for the damages and offered to help with Oktoberfest.

The Board accepted Mr. Fuierer’s heartfelt apology and unanimously agreed not to press additional charges on behalf of the Society.

## The First Socorro County Courthouse

While researching one of my history articles, I stumbled across a photograph in a 1939 *Socorro Chieftain* of the first Socorro courthouse built in 1851. It accompanied an article about the razing of the old 1884 built courthouse for the new WPA built courthouse – the one we have today. The photo was attributed to A. B. Baca.

I photographed the microfilm image of the article and digitally massaged it as best as I could for a decent image. The result is shown below.



**The first Socorro Courthouse – from an article in a 1939 Socorro Chieftain. Photograph extracted from the microfilm archive of the article.**

Socorro County was surveyed in 1850 and approved by the Territorial legislature in 1852. With this came funds to build a courthouse in Socorro, the county seat. The first courthouse, pictured above, was built 1851–1854. Little is known of this era of Socorro. However, we know this courthouset wasn't used for years.

It seems it all started with Manual Armijo, the Mexican governor that had the distinction of surrendering New Mexico to the Americans in 1846. Upon the surrender, he was sent to Mexico City to be tried for cowardice. After being cleared of these charges, the well respected former governor returned to N. M. by 1850 to live on his father's land in Lemitar.

Governor Armijo died in Lemitar in 1853 and is buried, per his request, in Socorro's San Miguel mission. Shortly thereafter, for undocumented reasons, the county seat was transferred from Socorro to Lemitar in 1854 (Twitchell says 1856) – perhaps to honor the former governor. The county seat remained in Lemitar until 1867, when transferred back to Socorro. It is not known where the county courthouse in Lemitar was located or what the first Socorro courthouse was used for from 1854–1867, when it was reactivated.

**The “new” Socorro County courthouse, built in 1884. It was razed in 1939, replaced by the courthouse we use today.**



In May 2009, the Society received a letter from an individual who had come into possession of an old photo card labeled “old building in Socorro, N.M.” and “courthouse” in very light pencil on the back side. He wanted the Society to identify the building if possible. I recognized the old photo immediately – that of the first courthouse I had found several years earlier in the *Chieftain*. In fact, it is the very same image. I confirmed the identity and asked if he could provide a high resolution scan for our records. He complied.

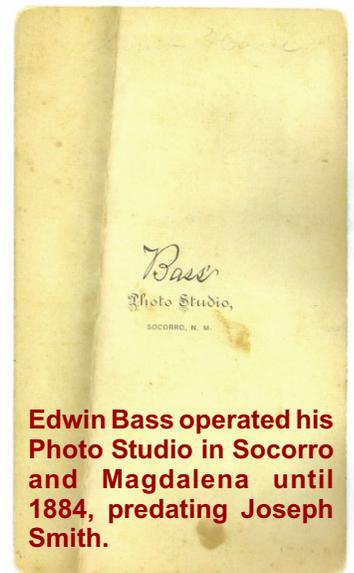
The photo-card is from the *Bass Photo Studio, Socorro, N.M.*, which operated in Socorro and Magdalena until 1884 – the year the new courthouse was built. Therefore, I suspect the photo was taken at the end of it's service in 1884 by Edwin Bass, likely as a historic photo prior to the old courthouse being razed. It was located where today's courthouse is located.

Edwin Bass' photo studio pre-dated Joseph Smith as Socorro's photographer.

Originally, the first courthouse was a flat-roofed, two-story adobe building. The pitch roof was added in later years, a renovation given to many of Socorro's old adobe buildings after the

arrival of the railroad in 1882. Some documentation talks about a few hangings “on the porch of the courthouse.” The porch and 2nd story stairs must have been designed for quick gallow assembly.

The high resolution scan sent to us is shown on the next page. It is



**Edwin Bass operated his Photo Studio in Socorro and Magdalena until 1884, predating Joseph Smith.**

*Continued next page*

## First Courthouse, cont'd

identical to the 1939 Socorro Chieftain photo, except obviously a far superior image than that extracted from the microfilm record. The original scan is a stereotype image, with two images side-by-side for viewing in a stereotype projector for a 3-dimensional appearance. This was a popular photo format in the 1880s.

The photo makes a nice addition to the Socorro County Historical Society photo archives of Socorro.

**A higher resolution copy of the original photo card of the first Socorro Courthouse, built 1851-1854. This courthouse was razed in 1884, the year the photo was taken.**



# Oktoberfest 2009

**Saturday, October 3, 2009**

**11:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.**

**Hammel Museum – Socorro, NM**

Time for Socorro's annual Oktoberfest in the Hammel Museum's own *wintergarten* with some traditional German bratwurst and sauerkraut, or BBQ beef brisquet if you're not quite in the Bavarian mood, brew (after all, the museum was a brewery!), yummy baked goods, arts and crafts vendors, live music, good old fashioned Socorro hospitality, and more.

**The Meal:** This year's mouth-watering fest is again being catered by M-Mountain Grill.

**The Brew.** Have ID ready if you don't look 21!

**Live entertainment** will be provided by Dr. Comstock's Oompah Band and western music by the Rawhide Band.

**Oktoberfest is fun** for all and open to the public. Admission to the museum, live entertainment, and activities is free. Meal tickets are \$10, mailed to SCHS members and available at the door. Adult beverages are sold separately.

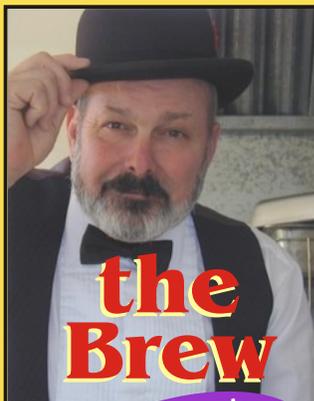
**For more information**, or if you would like to help, call Robert Eveleth at 418-8132 or Paul Harden at 835-7142.

## Menu



**Bratwurst  
Sauerkraut  
German potato salad  
Barbecued beef  
brisket  
Beans  
Green chili  
Rolls  
Soft drinks  
and condiments**

**Meal tickets \$10 each  
Available at the door  
and mailed to SCHS members**



**Still just  
\$3 per cup  
(16oz)**

Our honorary brewmeister, Robert Eveleth, has selected **George Killian's Irish Red**

for this year's brew by popular demand.



## Current Paid Active Members

Baca, Ramon, Jr.	Socorro, NM	Member
Banks, Sally	Socorro, NM	Member
Bejnar, Katherine	Socorro, NM	Member
Brook, Dorothy	Socorro, NM	LIFE
Brower, Kay	Socorro, NM	<i>Treasurer</i>
Bursum, Holm	Socorro, NM	LIFE
Dubois, Barbara	Socorro, NM	LIFE
Eveleth, Robert	Socorro, NM	<i>President</i>
Fullerton, Jane Jo	Socorro, NM	LIFE
Gerard, Blake	Socorro, NM	LIFE
Hammel, Richard & Delores	Ardmore TN	Member
Harden, Paul	Socorro, NM	<i>Secretary</i>
Headen, Charles	Socorro, NM	Member
Heatwole, Wotan (Roy)	Socorro, NM	<i>Board</i>
Houston, Vernon & Betty	Socorro, NM	Member
Kase, Ted	Socorro, NM	Member
Krehbiel, Paul & Kay	Socorro, NM	<i>Board</i>
Landers, Jess & Yvonne	Socorro, NM	LIFE
Love, Jane	Socorro, NM	LIFE
McKee, Jeanette	Socorro, NM	LIFE
McKelvey, Donald	Indiana, PA	LIFE
Oravec, z, Kalman and Barbara	Socorro, NM	Member
Penner, Rick	Socorro, NM	Member
Quinn, Hal & Carmen	Socorro, NM	LIFE
Romero, Jim V.	Lemitar, NM	Member
Ruff, Jim & Mary	Socorro, NM	Member
Seeger, John	Socorro, NM	Member
Senn, Frances & Ray	Socorro, NM	<i>Board</i>
Spargo, Jonathan	Socorro, NM	<i>Board</i>
Spargo, Lise	Socorro, NM	Member
Tripp, Don and Rosie	Socorro, NM	LIFE
Wade, Campbell	Albuquerque, NM	LIFE
White, Ruth	Socorro, NM	LIFE
Wilson, Spencer	Albuquerque	Member

## Members with Expired Memberships

Apps, Gilbert	Socorro, NM
Baca, Harold	Socorro, NM
Batsell, Kale	Socorro, NM
Clark, Barry	Socorro, NM
Cordova, Cathleen	Pleasanton, CA
DeChadenedes, Marcia	Socorro, NM
Egert, George K.	Socorro, NM
Egert, John B.	Socorro, NM
El Camino Real, Heritage Ctr	Socorro, NM
Ericksen, Ed	Magdalena, NM
Fitch, Tom & Polly	Socorro, NM
Fort, Karin	Socorro, NM
Francois, Betsy	Socorro, NM
Fullingim, Isenhour, Leard	Socorro, NM
Gonzales, Linda	Socorro, NM
Greene, Wrenetta	Socorro, NM
Hardern, Hubert	Socorro, NM
Houston, Vernon & Betty	Socorro, NM
Hughes, Hattie	Socorro, NM
Kieft, Tom & Sandy	Socorro, NM
MacLaren, Kathe	Socorro, NM
Mathews, Dave	Socorro, NM
McKee, Jeannette	Socorro, NM
Pavletich, Lu Ann	San Antonio, NM
Phillips, Lois	Socorro, NM
Popp, Carl & Barbara	Socorro, NM
Ramon, genevieve	Socorro, NM
Rippel, Ellen S.	Socorro, NM
Romero, Peter	Socorro, NM
Sais, Nick J.	Socorro, NM
Sanford, Allan & Alice	Socorro, NM
Socorro Chamber of Comm.	Socorro, NM
State Newsletter	Santa Fe NM
Sullivan, Ann	Datil, NM
Ward, Bob	Orleans, MA
Williams, Bootsie	Socorro, NM
Williams, Matt	Lemitar, NM
Willis, Becky	San Acacia

Due to the activity of the museum repair, SCHS has done a lousy job this year (particularly the Secretary) in sending notices to members with expired memberships. We would like you to renew your membership to support the Society. The Board decided that all members with expired memberships (right-hand list) who renew now (2009 dues) will **also renew you for your 2010 dues**. Two years for the cheap price of \$20 for individual members and \$35 for sustaining. **Thank You.**

# Socorro County Historical Society

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Oktoberfest  
Saturday, Oct. 3, 2009