

Socorro County Historical Society

Post Office Box 921
Socorro, New Mexico 87801

Membership News • Spring 2019

Printed periodically

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

SCHS Annual Meeting 2019 Held April 27, 2019

The Annual Meeting of the **Socorro County Historical Society** was held on Saturday, April 27 at the Garcia Opera House with a good crowd of members and non-members alike.

• SOCIETY CHANGES •

Dr. Peggy Hardman has stepped down as a Board member and SCHS Vice President after years of service for personal reasons and some extended travel later this year. She will remain active with SCHS as she can with her usual contributions of historical research and helping with archiving the SCHS holdings.

Hannah Brower was elected by the membership to fill the Board vacancy. Hannah is a newcomer to Socorro, a new telescope operator at the VLA. Originally from Alaska, Hannah came here from the Lowell Observatory in Flagstaff, Arizona. The planet Pluto was discovered at Lowell Observatory in 1930 by Clyde Tombaugh, who later taught astronomy at NMSU in Las Cruces. Hannah was active in Flagstaff with their historical society and giving historical tours of the Lowell Observatory. Already impressed with Socorro's rich history, we welcome her aboard and to Socorro.



Hannah Brower finding a strange artifact on a recent trip to San Marcial

• NEW MEMBERS •

We gained seven new members at the Annual meeting and three more by our online PayPal.

Welcome to all our new members and for your support of SCHS. These newsletters keep our members informed of activities, in addition to history articles of local interest. Past newsletters with lots of Socorro history are located on our website at:

<http://socorro-history.org/NEWS/news.html>

• ANNUAL DUES •

SCHS dues run from April-to-April. About 50% of our members have already renewed for 2019. Thank you for your continued support. If you have not yet renewed for 2019, please do so now (just \$20 per year). Thank you.

Mail to P.O. Box 921, Socorro, NM 87801

Or, contact treasurer Prescilla Mauldin

<pres87801@gmail.com>

Or, by PayPal from our website homepage at:

<http://socorro-history.org>

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Ancient Tattooing & SP Engine No. 18

Visit Us: www.socorro-history.org

• PUBLIC PRESENTATION •
SAN MARCIAL

The public presentation at the Annual Meeting was by Paul Harden on the history of San Marcial with focus on the area before, during and after the destructive 1929 and 1937 floods. This year, 2019, marks the 90th anniversary of the 1929 flood that destroyed “New Town” San Marcial and the Santa Fe Railroad yards and shops. San Marcial, a town of about 2,000 persons, has been abandoned since. The nearby villages of Plaza Viejo (Old Town), La Mesa, San Geronimo and Valverde were rebuilt — but those were totally destroyed by the 1937 flood.

The destruction of the San Marcial towns is a sad story in Socorro County History. Whether you worked for the railroad or an area merchant, farmer, or rancher, life was good with most residents living with a measure of affluence. Most lost just about everything they owned, escaping the flood waters with the shirts on their backs, never again to achieve the life or affluence they once had.

Many historic photos and maps from the SCHS archives, family contributions, and other sources were shown in the presentation. These sad images document the flood and the near total extent of the damage.

The importance is the San Marcial floods completely changed the face and economy of Socorro County felt to this day, and displaced and forever changed the lives of countless families, many now living in Socorro.



The Harvey House during the 1929 Flood San Marcial.

The “Harvey Girls” and guests awaiting rescue after the 1929 San Marcial flood.



Most structures collapsed from the floodwaters causing near total destruction of the town.

• AUTO TOUR OF SAN MARCIAL •

Sunday, April 28, the day after the Annual Meeting, SCHS conducted a guided auto-tour of the San Marcial area. About 40 people in 13 cars participated in the tour – probably about the largest population in the area since 1937. The cars were split into two tour groups, the first led by Craig Hennies and Dr. Peggy Hardman, and the second group by Paul Harden. There’s not much left to see at San Marcial unless you know where to look – the purpose of the auto-tour to see a few of the remaining structures, the old roundhouse wall, 1880 built railroad trestle, the town cemetery, and other features.

It was a great day for the tour: clear, only a slight breeze and warm (in fact, pushing hot by the end of the tour). While most participants were from Socorro, we had a car from Magdalena, a nearby ranch, and a couple from Winston for a fun and enjoyable day.

All three guides were showered with compliments on such an informative and enjoyable tour. Most asked, “When are you doing this again? I want my family and friends to also experience this.” We’re all well pleased everyone enjoyed the San Marcial tour. A hit for SCHS.

• THE NEXT SAN MARCIAL TOUR •
Saturday, September 14, 2019

Due to the inquiries for the next tour received thus far, we have decided to “reveal” our plans. The next San Marcial tour will be on **Saturday, September 14, 2019**. The 2nd flood that “finished off” San Marcial occurred Sept. 13–14, 1929 – thus the date is the **90th anniversary to the day**.

It is just too hot around Black Mesa and San Marcial in the summer months for a tour. Details on this September tour and RSVP will be released towards the end of August on our website, Facebook page, and email to members. We will have three guides for the tour to accommodate more cars and participants. So **save the date!**

• SCHS YEAR IN REVIEW •

Oktoberfest is obviously our biggest event of the year and our primary source of revenue for the Society. Socorro Fest was held on the same day as Oktoberfest in 2018. We sold about the same number of meals as usual. Socorro Fest did provide additional attendees to enjoy our entertainment, but appeared few purchased meals, though beer sales saw a slight increase. We always thank the bands and dance groups for their excellent music and entertainment. They volunteer every year to help SCHS and always ask to be invited back — all because of your attendance and appreciation of their talents.

Socorro County Historical Society had a busy year with other activities, though many of them were “behind the scenes.”

- Throughout the year, we get asked to hold tours of the Hammel Museum for various groups, such as several school groups, the Albuquerque Senior Citizens, the Civil War Reenactors, bus tours, and the like.
- SCHS gets numerous requests during the year for help with various historical and book projects. Paul Harden, Peggy Hardman and Bob Eveleth usually assist these requests. We also get requests for family research, though we don't have the resources for genealogical research.
- Several members visited Rosedale and Kelly to document mining history for our website.
- An NMT class studied Prohibition and made their own brews for fun. Judging was held at the Hammel by the SCHS Board. Plenty of fun!

• The NMT Society of Petroleum Engineers, SPE, has been very helpful this past year with cleanup and work on the Hammel, including helping with Oktoberfest. You can thank the SPE for cutting all those weeds in the

wintergarten for Oktoberfest. In turn, they have used the Hammel for SPE meetings and parties.

- SCHS assisted Magdalena with presentations for the Frontier Days Festival and well received.
- SCHS located the original Santa Fe Magdalena Abandonment Documents that contains a host of information on the “Maggie Line.” They are currently being reproduced for us.
- We continue to work on our new archive unit for storing newspapers and other historic items for safe storage and access.
- The Hammel is in decent condition except for the windows. Some frames are rotting and 100 year old glazing causing the glass panes to come loose. We will shortly have a carpenter rebuild the bad frames and other work to fix all of the windows to match the 1890s originals.
- Dennis Gabaldon loaned SCHS some early 1900s photos of San Marcial and Rosedale by Esther Comstock - many original photos which have now been scanned for the SCHS archives.

Some of the activities your SCHS Board has kept busy with preserving and sharing Socorro County History with others.



COTTONWOOD VALLEY CHARTER SCHOOL TOURS THE HAMMEL

Photos by Maggie Baranuk



Chuck Zimmerly describes the Hammel to a full house of students.



Students were fascinated by the old brewery to the old bottles.



The model trains were also a big hit — even for the girls.

Year in Review: President: Woodrow Wilson
U.S. Population: 104,514,000

World War I was over; troops returning home; Spanish Influenza pandemic continues; women given right to vote; 18th Amendment ratified starting Prohibition.

Around Socorro trying to improve roads west to Springerville for Ocean-to-Ocean Highway; several companies formed looking for oil around Socorro; new school house being built; A.H. Hilton killed in car wreck.

- Jan. 2 A.H. Hilton killed; car skidded, overturned on icy road near San Marcial
- Jan. 6 Theodore Roosevelt dies of heart attack
- Jan. 15 Boston Molasses Disaster - tank rupture floods Boston streets with 2 million gallons molasses kills 21, injures 150.
- Jan. 16 18th Amendment ratified
"Prohibiting intoxicating liquors."
- Jan. 25 San Miguel Parish priest past 19 years Father Martin dies, age 74
- Feb. 7 Two earthquakes in Socorro within 24 hours, minor damage reported
- Feb. 25 Oregon places a one-cent per gallon tax on gasoline - first state to do so.
- Feb. 26 Congress establishes Grand Canyon National Park
- Mar. 1 Vladimir Lenin converts Russian government to communism; U.S. black lists anyone thought to be a communist
- Mar. 2 Socorro selected for airfield for Ocean to Ocean Airlines; airfield built
- Mar. 25 Three youngsters from Magdalena arrested for attempting to derail the AT&SF Maggie Line at Water Canyon
- Mar. 29 Barnum & Bailey Circus merges with Ringling Brothers Circus.
- Apr. 19 Newly formed Socorro Petroleum Co. to begin oil exploration around Socorro
- Apr. 28 League of Nations formed
- May 15 Ex-Gov. Curry purchases old Chambon (Park) hotel, plans major improvements
- May 19 Mt. Kelud (Indonesia/Java) volcano erupts, killing 5,000 in 104 villages
- May 29 Einstein's theory of relativity proved correct during an eclipse
- June 2 Mail bombs sent by Anarchists detonate in eight American cities
- June 15 Pancho Villa attacks Ciudad Juárez
- June 26 Germany scuttles their fleet at Scapa Flow to prevent British capture
- June 28 Germany signs Treaty of Versailles, ending World War I.
- July 5 Work underway on road from Datil to Quemado for Ocean-to-Ocean Highway
- July 6 First crossing of the Atlantic by an airship; British dirigible used
- July 24 Valverde Hotel opens
- Aug. 13 British troops fire on crowd in India killing 350 civilians
- Aug. 19 Wm. G. Hammel, 65, owner of the brewery and ice plant dies of a stroke
- Sep. 2 Communist Party of America organizes in Chicago
- Sep. 6 U.S. army sends convoy to see how long it takes to move an army cross country by auto trucks. Only took 61 days!
- Sept. 10 Florida Keys hurricane kills 600
- Sept. 10 Gen. Pershing arrives New York City from Europe with 25,000 troops
- Sept. 18 16-ft. storm surge kills 280 on Gulf Coast
- Sept. 27 Democratic National Committee voted to allow female members
- Oct. 2 President Woodrow Wilson suffers stroke, left partially paralyzed last 18 months; heavily defeated in 1920.
- Oct. 10 Contract awarded for new Socorro school, \$34,600, Trost & Trost architect
- Oct. 16 Ripley's "Believe It or Not" first appears
- Oct. 17 Radio Corp. of America (RCA) formed
- Oct. 23 Dep. Sheriff Harry Hall arrested on federal charges for stealing two barrels of whiskey from the AT&SF Maggie Line
- Oct. 26 Pres. Wilson vetoes Prohibition bill; overridden by Congress.
- Oct. 28 Prohibition legally begins with passage of the Volstead Act.
- Oct. 28 Hammel Brewery ceases beer production
- Nov. 2 Tucson opens first municipality owned airport in the U.S.
- Nov. 4 Mrs. Rose Lowenstein, widow of Leo Lowenstein, marries brother George Lowenstein. George died 2 days later.
- Nov. 25 County raises \$10,000 from a levy tax to improve Ocean-to-Ocean Highway
- Dec. 20 Congress passes to restrict immigration
- Dec. 26 Babe Ruth is sold to New York Yankees for \$125,000

WINDSOR HOTEL BURNS

Socorro's last major hotel – gone

C.T. Brown Says “Won't Rebuild”

A fire broke out about noon Tuesday, July 18 (1905) in Henry May's feed yard. The summer heat and brisk winds carried the fire to May's livery barn and the Windsor Hotel. The Socorro Hose Co. was quickly on the scene only to find there was no water pressure in the mains. Embers falling on roofs threatened nearby homes. A bucket brigade was quickly formed to protect the homes of AT&SF Conductor P.J. Savage, H.O. Bursum, Attorney James Fitch, and A.F. Katzenstein. Other members of the Hose Co. were used to remove valuables and furnishings from the burning hotel.

While the brickwork of the three story hotel appears repairable with heavy smoke damage, owner C.T. Brown and hotel manager P.J.

From 1905 Socorro Chieftain

Yonkers said the insides and roof are beyond repair and will not seek to rebuild. Total loss of the hotel building is about \$16,500 (\$435,000 today).



Socorro's Windsor Hotel

The loss of the Windsor Hotel left Socorro with no major hotel. Only the Winkler and Chambon (Park) hotels remained, though both were falling into disrepair. The Windsor fire was one of five major losses in Socorro in three years, all lost for lack of water. Angry citizens forced the City to improve the water system as a result. This also left Socorro with a need for a new, comfortable hotel. This need continued until the Val Verde Hotel was built 1918-1919.

100 Years Ago

VALVERDE HOTEL OPENS

Formal Opening July 24, 1919

Most Modern Hotel in New Mexico

The Valverde Hotel opened for business on July 24 (1919) with quite a fanfare, guests from all over the state, and plenty of Socorroans. Over 50 people attended the banquet following the formal dedication in the luxurious dining room.

Designed in the California mission style by popular architect Henry Trost, construction began in June 1918 on Manzanarez and 6th streets, the location of the old Windsor Hotel. The 2-story Valverde Hotel consists of 60 guests rooms, luxurious dining room with a modern kitchen, and a spacious lobby. It is modern throughout with running cold and hot water in each room, furnace heat, and the entire building electrically lighted. Though not one of the largest hotels in New Mexico, it is one of the most modern and comfortable in the Southwest.

The Val Verde hotel is owned by

From 1919 Socorro Chieftain

the Socorro Holding Co., C.T. Brown President. D.E. Snyder of Ft. Smith, Arkansas has been hired to manage the Val Verde. Thirty-two of the 60 rooms had been rented the first evening of the opening. It is sure to make Socorro a popular place to rest in comfort for travelers.

The Val Verde Hotel was built primarily for travelers on the Santa Fe Railroad, however, it also quickly became a popular stop on the newly established Ocean-to-Ocean Highway (later

U.S. 60), for which Socorro was a popular auto stop for gas, food, and lodging – at the Val Verde.

The Val Verde cost \$65,000 to build (about \$1 million today), not including the furnishings.

Manager D.E. Snyder died of pneumonia in 1922 at age 34, leaving a wife and three small girls. His wife managed the hotel until 1929. Her brother, Walter Paxton and wife, ran the Val Verde until his death in 1955.

2019 is the 100th anniversary of the Val Verde. It is unfortunate it is virtually abandoned and in disrepair today.

**SOCORRO'S HOTEL
JUST COMPLETED
FORMALLY OPENED**

(SPECIAL DISPATCH TO MORNING JOURNAL)
Socorro, N. M., July 24.—Socorro is feeling cheery. And Socorro has a right to put on airs, strut around and lord it over her neighbors. Tonight she dedicated and formally opened to the public her new hotel, the Val Verde. True, the hotel is not as large as some other hostleries in New Mexico, but from the standpoint of beauty and convenience it stands without a peer.

The hotel, which was designed by Trost & Trost, architects of El Paso, cost \$65,000, not including the furniture. It contains sixty guest rooms, a commodious dining room, a kitchen embodying all the latest improve-

Repatriating 1,000s of Stolen Southwest Ancient Artifacts

Five years ago, agents from the Federal Bureau of Investigation descended on a farm house in rural Indiana packed with ancient artifacts unlawfully obtained by the home's owner, 91-year-old Don Miller. The F.B.I. received a tip that Miller had been keeping ancient human bones, which in turn launched the raid on his home in 2013. Packed into display cases in his farmhouse were thousands of objects from around the world. Miller had been illegally collecting ancient artifacts since the 1940s. The F.B.I. says Miller's collecting had "crossed the line into illegality and outright looting" and included clear and intentional violations of all antiquity laws in the U.S. and elsewhere.

That became particularly clear when agents found the human bones among his artifacts.

Most staggering of all was when investigators discovered Miller had amassed approximately 500 sets of human remains, far larger than collections in most museums. Many are believed to have been



Photo: New York Times

Over 500 human remains were found in Miller's basement, mostly of Native American origin.

looted from Native American burial grounds.

Over the six-day raid in 2013, the agency seized more than 7,000 objects in the collection of about 40,000 artifacts. It remains the largest single recovery of cultural property in the agency's history. Included were rare Columbian, Incan and Aztecan items, illegal artifacts from China, Cambodia and other Asian countries, various island nations, and thousands of items from the Southwest. Witnessing the sheer number of artifacts was "jaw-dropping," F.B.I. Agent Tim Carpenter later recollected.

Since the raid, the F.B.I. has been quietly working to repatriate the objects and remains to their rightful owners, including numerous



Photo: F.B.I.

A small portion of Don Miller's home with thousands of artifacts on display.

Native American tribes – the Navajo and some pueblos in New Mexico among them. Items have been returned to China and other countries. But to date, only about 15 percent of the horde has been returned. In the hopes of speeding up the repatriation process, the F.B.I. is now publicizing the case. Anthropologists at several universities are helping to catalog and identify the items so they can be properly returned.

It was no secret Miller possessed a collection of artifacts that, according to the FBI, had ultimately swelled to over 42,000 in number. He often invited local residents, reporters and Boy Scout troops into his home to view his artifacts. However, he kept the human remains largely out of sight. He was known by many as an amateur



Photo: New York Times

Hundreds and hundreds of intact Native American and pueblo pottery are difficult to identify since Miller kept very poor records where his items were from or found.

archaeologist. Investigators do not know how many of the artifacts he recovered himself or from where, or how many were obtained on the black market.

Continued next page 

Miller died in 2015, two years after the F.B.I. raid, and thus all charges were vacated. He was part of a life-long farming family near Indianapolis, Indiana. He had an engineering background and dabbled in various enterprises throughout his life. He was also a Christian missionary, recently in Haiti, who was known for his collections of treasures accumulated traveling the world on “archaeological digs.”

Miller also has a New Mexico connection (other than perhaps looting archaeological sites). He claimed he worked on the Manhattan Project during WWII. Service records show he was an Army soldier 1944-1945 at Alamogordo standing guard duty at Trinity Site, though not one of Robert Oppenheimer’s assistants as he claimed – an early sign of his lies and deceptions.

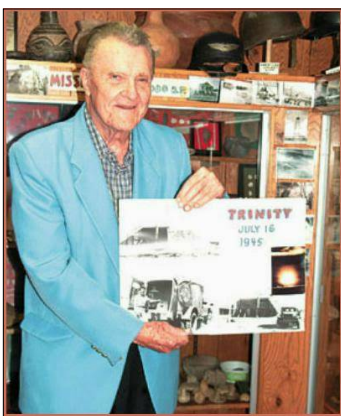


Photo: Indianapolis Star
Don Miller showing photos of working with Robert Oppenheimer at the Trinity Site, a claim not quite true.

The Story Continues . . .

Preparing this article, something kept gnawing at me. Don Miller is a fairly common name, so why the feeling of familiarity? Then, it hit me as I was looking at the F.B.I. photographs of the raid. The photo of Miller’s home (to the right) clearly shows a 65 foot tower and ham radio “Yagi” type beam antennas recognized by any amateur radio operator.



Photo: F.B.I.
Don Miller’s house with a distinctive ham radio antenna.

Our looting “archeologist” was also a “ham” that made quite a name for himself in ham radio circles years ago.

In amateur radio, part of the hobby is to see how many different countries you can contact. A recognized award is the “DXCC” for working 100 different countries. Some hams have worked 300 countries or more to be inducted into the prestigious “DXCC Honor Roll.” These awards are well regulated to ensure honesty. There are currently 339 recognized countries and entities, although not all of them have radio hams.

In the 1960s, our Don Miller, W9WNV, began traveling the world to put rare countries on the air such as Yemen and Tibet, along with dozens of small islands with no hams. This brought great excitement to work countries never before activated earning many their DXCC awards. Miller often worked 5,000 hams or more from each of these rare locations.

Due to some illegal and unethical ham radio practices, it was discovered that many of his operations were bogus. He never operated from the island nations he claimed after hams sent him thousands of dollars to help finance his expeditions. Most contacts with Miller over a 10 year span were deemed invalid, causing many hams to lose their DXCC awards or booted off the honor roll. In short, he disgraced the hobby. For older hams, his name still arouses anger and disgust. Makes one wonder if these foreign ham radio expeditions weren’t just a cover up for his looting of foreign artifacts.

SCHS has several members who are hams, including Board members Paul Harden, NA5N and Jon Spargo, KC5NTW. Some of us remember the Don Miller debacle well.

Don Miller was a smart man with resources. A shame he seemed to have spent his life flaunting the law and living one sham after another with little regard for others.

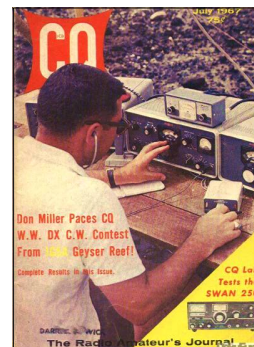


Photo: CQ magazine
1967 magazine of Miller at one of his supposed locations

TATTOOING IN THE PUEBLOS

Some archaeologists are in disagreement on the prevalence of tattooing by the early pueblo people for lack of evidence. Yet, in 1582, **Antonio Espejo** and **Father Beltrán** recorded they met a heavily tattooed people in the Big Bend region of Texas. In 1623, **Fray Juan de Salas** wrote of a band of tattooed Jumanos Indians that arrived at Isleta pueblo to be baptised. Little is later written by the Spaniards, either due to not seeing tattooed pueblo people, or it had simply been commonly accepted.

In 1972, a pueblo excavation in Utah near the four corners found a pair of cactus spines, stained at the tips with black ink, and bound together with yucca leaves. Turns out, others had found similar artifacts at other pueblo excavations over the years. Recent analysis

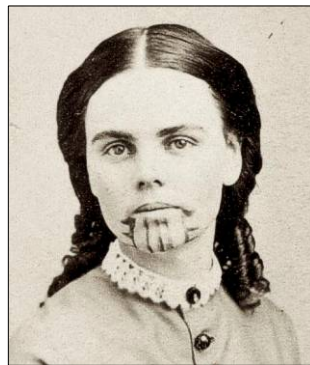
of the black stains identified the unknown artifacts to indeed being tattooing needles – proving a fairly widespread practice. The Utah needles were dated to 79–130 A.D., a period known as the Basketmaker II era. Early tattoos identified tribal membership, tribal position, and spiritual significance.

The oldest known tattoo is that on **Ötzi the Iceman**, the 5,300 year-old mummy found in the Italian Alps in 1991.



Photo: Smithsonian Magazine
Tattooing needles found in a pueblo in Utah near the four-corners, dated about 2,000 years old.

An infamous tattoo is that of **Olive Oatman**, captured in Arizona by the Yavapai Indians in 1851. At only 14 years old, she was tattooed on her chin and arms to indicate she was a Yavapai slave. She was later traded to the Mohave Indians. In 1856, she was found by an Army scout who arranged her return in trade for several blankets and a horse. Reunited with her brother at Ft. Yuma, Olive became a national sensation and went on lecture circuits for several years so people could see her. She married in 1865 and lived the rest of her life in Sherman, TX with her husband and her Yavapai tattoos.



Olive Oatman in 1865

SOUTHERN PACIFIC No. 18 (SP-18)

SP-18 is a 1911 Baldwin built 4-6-0 narrow gauge engine of the **Southern Pacific Railroad**, retired in 1955. It was restored in 2017 in California and “loaned” to the **Durango & Silverton Railroad** (D&S) in 2018 to get some track and boiler time on the engine.



SP18 power to Silverton

On April 9, 2019, the SP-18 departed for Silverton, CO pulling an excursion train. On the 2.6% grade up the canyon, there was a loud bang and the engine stopped with a large hole in the drive cylinder. A blown cylinder is considered a catastrophic failure. Removing the head and driver rods in the field revealed the piston had failed – but *not the cylinder*. The D&S shops will cast a new piston and cylinder head to have the engine running again by fall.



Photo: Olaf Rasmussen
Damage to the cylinder head halted the engine



Photo: Olaf Rasmussen
Cylinder head removed shows damaged piston

Your SCHS Board of Directors:

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