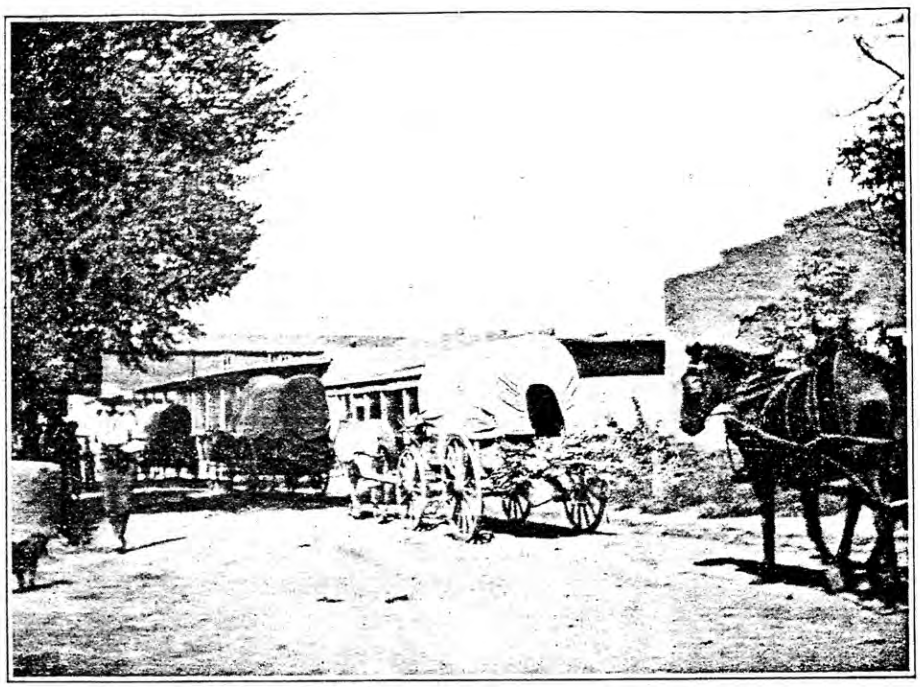
AYER Y HOY en Taos

Yesterday and Today in Taos County and Northern New Mexico



COVERED WAGONS PASSING THE CARSON HOUSE. 1925

Carson returns to Taos

Winter 1991 $3.00

A publication of the Taos County Historical Society

EDITOR'S PAGE

by Judy Romero-Oak

David Caffey's name is no longer at the top of this page, but we'll all happily remember him as the first editor of *AYER Y HOY* and the originator of the first Taos County Historical Society newsletter.

When David started the newsletter, he asked for name suggestions from the community and mine, AYER Y HOY, was chosen. When I coined the name it didn't occur to me that it would be a little difficult for non-Spanish-speaking tongues to handle.

For those of you whose tongues are twisting, here is an easy way to do it: imagine the single Spanish "r" as the double "t" in "kitty" and say it a little more softly than in English, and it will come out perfectly.

Phonetically, it looks like AH-YÉTTY OY. Run it all together and people will think you're a Spanish-speaking pro, and very sophisticated.

***

This issue talks about Kit Carson and his descendants. Some consider him a hero, others think he was a villain. We all know there is no absolutely "correct" view of history and there are always two sides, at least, to every story.

To my Hispanic relatives, Kit Carson is "just another Indian killer". This is understandable, since some of their ancestors were Apache, and Carson said he didn't care much for the Apaches in his day, a prejudice shared by most New Mexicans at the time. My "Anglo" family comes from Missouri, as did Carson, and when I read his comments it sounds like some of my cousins talking.

History is usually less concerned with laying blame than with exploring causes, or with simply accounting facts. Those facts, though, look different, depending on from which vantage point you're looking. United States history was first written by people on the East coast, who had little idea of what was really happening in the West. Carson himself was surprised at the romanticized and exaggerated stories being printed about his life.

In this issue we have an imaginary conversation with him, based on his own comments and on quotes from those who knew him. I think he might approve of the chance we've given him to defend himself.

We welcome your letters, comments, and suggestions for articles.

Happy history hunting!

CONTENTS

Cover: Photo from "Kit Carson's Own Story of His Life", Blanche C. Grant

ISSUE NO. 11: WINTER 1991

AYER Y HOY en Taos
Yesterday and Today in Taos County and Northern New Mexico

Published semi-annually by the Taos County Historical Society. AYER Y HOY publishes materials of historical interest in Taos County and the Northern New Mexico area, including articles of a scholarly nature and informal narratives judged to be of general interest. Editorial contributions are welcome.

AYER Y HOY is mailed to all members of the Taos County Historical Society as a benefit of membership. Memberships are $10 individual, $15 family, and $25 sustaining.

PUBLICATIONS COMMITTEE
Mildred Buchanan
Char Graebner
Toni Haegler

EDITOR
Judy Romero-Oak

THE TAOS COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY is a New Mexico non-profit organization dedicated to the study and preservation of the historical resources of Taos County and Northern New Mexico. Membership is open to any interested person, regardless of residence.

Tom Bruce, President
Alex Fletcher, Vice President
Sadie O. Knight, Secretary
Dora M. Adkins, Treasurer

P.O. Box 2447
Taos, New Mexico 87571

CARSON RETURNS TO TAOS

by Char Boie Graebner

Char Graebner

John Michael Carson and his famous great-grandfather

Strange sounds were coming from the front rooms of the Kit Carson Historic Museum in Taos. But when the receptionist went to investigate, she found nothing. Nevertheless, she felt spooked. As she walked back to her desk, she felt as though someone was watching her.

She spent the next 30 minutes getting her desk and cash drawer ready before she opened for visitors. At nine o'clock she opened the door to the museum. A few minutes later, a young man walked through the door. He stood quietly for a moment, and when the receptionist looked up, she almost fainted. She thought she was looking at the ghost of Kit Carson.

But it turned out to be a real person: John Michael Carson, the great-grandson of Kit and an exact image of him, as depicted in some of the portraits and posters that hang in the museum. Like Kit, John is short and slim, with a mustache and reddish-brown hair and penetrating eyes. Under a shock of thick hair is the broad Carson forehead.

Kit Carson's home is now a museum. He and his wife, Josefa, lived in the house for 25 years, from the time they were married in 1843 until their deaths in 1868. The Carsons died within a month of each other while they were staying in Colorado with their best friend, Tom Boggs. Tom and his wife, with the help of Josefa's widowed sister, Ignacia Bent, brought up the Carson children in Boggsville, Colorado. William, Christopher II and Charles Carson became ranchers in southern Colorado.

Great-grandson John is the son of Jesse Carson, whose father was Charles, Kit's youngest son. John was born and raised near La Junta, Colorado, not far from the ghost town of Boggsville.

The first time John came to Taos was in 1961, when he was too young to remember the visit to Kit's home. He was eight years old when he visited again, and he remembers that he thought the adobe mud house then was rather strange, with funny ceilings (rough log beams covered with uneven planks of wood). As time went by, he came to Taos more often and began to get a feeling for the life and times of his famous ancestor. Now John tries to come to Taos at least once a year.

Kit Carson is supposed to have been a soft-spoken man who hated braggarts. Perhaps that is why his heirs do not boast about their ancestor and choose to live their lives rather modestly. Though they are quiet about Kit, they nevertheless are proud of him, and they carefully preserve books, letters and papers that once belonged to him.

John Carson grew up in a quiet ranching family. He knew at an early age that there was

something extraordinary about his family's history, but when he was young he was more interested in horses than history. When he was 10 years old his father came to his grade school to talk about Kit Carson, and John suddenly realized that he had a very special great-grandfather. Later he became fascinated with the area where Kit had traveled, especially the route from his home in Colorado to Kit's home in Taos. John's father Jesse pointed out a place where the family used to camp when they traveled to Taos by wagon. Every time John passes the spot now, he gets an emotional lift that seems to transport him back to the days when his great-grandfather traveled the trail.

John says that his grandfather Charles, a rancher, was interviewed many times by people wanting to know more about Kit. These interviews appeared in newspapers and magazines, and the family kept copies of them. John has read them all. His favorites are the ones which figure John C. Fremont and Charles and William Bent. Kit's fame can be traced to the time when he accompanied Fremont on the first expedition through the Rockies to California, a trip that was written up in official reports, and eventually published in books. It was form those reports, with their glowing accounts of Kit's accomplishments, that the dime novelists gleaned some of their material to build stories about Kit that made him a legend in his own time.

The family of Kit's brother-in-law, Governor Charles Bent, became part of the Carson household after the governor was killed in 1847. John and his family often talk about the Bent brothers, William and Charles, and about the famous fort they built in Colorado. The Bents came from an early American background, and stories about Silas Bent, who was one of those who organized the Boston Tea Party, are always fun to hear, as are tales about the rendezvous of the Indians and the mountain men.

John recalls one story that is not printed in any books about Kit. His grandfather told the family that after Singing Grass, Kit's first wife, died, Kit brought his two young children to Taos. On the way he stopped at Bent's Fort, and while there, his little boy was killed when he fell into a vat of soap. We know that Kit had a daughter, Adeline, by Singing Grass, but no one has heard of her little brother. Perhaps it was too personal a tragedy to be told outside of the family.

John Carson teaches American history, including the Indian wars, and he thinks events that took place during the westward movement are not as simple or cue-and-dried as most people believe. He says that though Kit Carson was involved in Indian wars, he was still sympathetic to their problems. He adopted a Ute boy and ransomed other Indian children who were captives of different Indian tribes. He was not involved in every skirmish during the Navajo campaign, which was actually run by General Carlton. He wrote letter after letter to his superiors, complaining about the fact that the Navajo were not being given enough rations, medicine and blankets, and made many trips to Washington on behalf of the Utes.

John Michael Carson grew up surrounded by old books about his great-grandfather, and the family owns some short letters that John says tell about Kit's trips. The big question, he says, is whether or not Kit actually wrote the letters, since he was not able to read and write. Kit seldom had to do more than sign his name to reports. In the army he dictated letters to an assistant, and at home Josefa took care of the correspondence.

According to John, Kit's favorite food was probably buffalo. His favorite means of transportation was by horse. He went from coast to coast, traveling most of the way on horseback, and probably covered more mileage that way than anyone of his time. He owned a strong, black stallion he called "Apache". It was known for its endurance, and as his favorite horse it traveled with him wherever he went.

When Kit and Josefa died, their children ranged in age from a few weeks old to age 15. The children remained in Boggsville, which is now a ghost town. John would like to have more time to look around Boggsville, though there is nothing left there but part of the house where the Carson children lived. Three rooms, kitchen, living room and bedroom, and an attic still stand.

The Kit Carson House in Taos almost had a similar fate. All but three rooms in it too had fallen when it was rescued and rebuilt by the people of Taos. Though the Taos house contains a lot of memorabilia from Kit's life, there are many things in other museums. John says Kit's beautiful wool-lined and embroidered leather coat hangs in the Trinidad, Colorado museum. John is having it copied so that he will have a costume to wear to frontier events held at Bent's Fort and the Trade Fair at the Martinez Hacienda. He'll have to be careful, because when people see him dressed like a trapper they may make the same mistake the Taos receptionist made. They could think it is the ghost of Kit Carson.

***

From Char Graebner's visit with John Michael Carson, Taos, 1990.

AN INTERVIEW WITH KIT CARSON

By Judy Romero-Oak

Note: I've been careful not to put words into Kit Carson's mouth. His comments in this imaginary interview are either quoted directly or paraphrased from his own views as preserved in his autobiography, from books about him, and from people who knew him.

A note about the Missouri dialect: Some may think it's an effort to belittle him; it's not. The quotes we have preserved make it plain he kept the dialect all his life; he was a plain-spoken, modest man. I have relatives in Missouri, and since watching "The Story of English", I've considered the dialect a valid part of Americana and an honorable part of the evolution of American English.

***

AYH: Kit Carson is one of the most controversial figures in a state that abounds with controversial people. The feud between Bishop Lamy and Father Martinez, for instance, is still being fought here in Taos. Mr. Carson's house is a museum now. A state park, a street and a foundation are a few of the things named for him. And some people still argue about whether he deserves the honors.

Some people consider Mr. Carson a hero, and some are convinced he was a villain. So we've gotten a special dispensation to invite him here, in spirit, to talk about those days that are still so controversial in Taos. Perhaps he can enlighten us on how his world looked from his point of view.

Good morning, Mr. Carson.

Carson: Howdy. A mite cold today. Reminds me of some hellish cold nights we spent when we were out chasin' Injuns.

AYH: Well, Mr. Carson, that's one of the things we want to talk about—chasing Indians.

C: Call me Kit. I ain't never held much with formal talk.

AYH: Thank you. And call me Judy. Here, have a cup of hot coffee. Frankly, Kit, I kind of feel like I have an understanding of you; part of my family is from the Missouri Ozarks, and I married into one of the Taos Hispanic families, like you did. When I read your book, it sounded just like one of my cousins talking. But in my Hispanic family in Taos, you're a villain; they say you were just an Indian killer. Of course, part of the family is Apache. How would you answer people like that?

C: As you know, I had no love for the Apaches. To me they was just trouble, 'cause they wouldn't settle down and act like civilized human bein's. Now, you take the Utes and the Pueblos, they're okay, because they purty much kept to themselves and didn't bother us white folks. We had one problem with the Pueblos there in 1847, you know when they killed my brother-in-law, Governor Bent. But them Apaches and Navahos, they wouldn't do what we told 'em to. We like to never got 'em settled.

AYH: What do you mean by "settled"?

C: Why, we wanted to move 'em off their ancestral land and put 'em on reservations. We figured if we got 'em in unfamiliar territory they'd settle down and act like white folks—forget their maraudin' ways. You folks livin' now don't know how hard it was, plowin' a field with one hand on your gun, always worryin' if an arrow would get you in the back, or if you sent your kids out to bring in the sheep, if they'd be kidnapped before they came home.

AYH: Yes, I know a man in Taos who just in 1989 finally tracked down a relative in Oklahoma, a descendent a relative who was kidnapped by Indians while he was out watching the animals. But according to history, the Hispanics and Pueblos were just as active in kidnapping Apache and Navaho children every time the Navahos agreed to peace. At one time the Navahos reported more than 200 of their children had been kidnapped and sold as slaves. Someone wrote, "Slaving, raiding, and fighting characterized Mexican New Mexico, and little changed after Anglo-Americans arrived..."[1]

C: Yes, that's right. 'Course you have the advantage of lookin' back at it after it's all done. We heard a lot of conflictin' reports, and it was years before we sorted out what was true and what wasn't. I'll be the first to admit that we did a lot of things we shouldn't o' done. Like mebby when General Carleton told us to kill every Navaho man in sight and take the women and children captive. We were ordered to kill even those who wanted peace, and forbidden to talk peace with 'em. Even if they was Injuns, that's not right. I told Carleton I didn't care for this kind of warfare. But orders is orders. Carleton was a educated man, had social upbringin'. Who was I to question him?

AYH: Every generation has argued about whether a soldier has a moral obligation to refuse orders he considers wrong.

C: Well, I thought some orders were wrong. But on the other hand, I'd seen many people die in Apache and Navaho raids, and that ain't a purty sight. Yes, we took scalps too when we killed the Indians.

Figured that was a way to send a message that we were jest as strong as they was. Still, I didn't hold no truck with killin' 'em when they wanted to talk peace. But the politicans in Washington jest got fed up. The government was tired of the Indian wars just goin' on and on, and when we did get 'em to sign a peace treaty they'd break it soon as our backs were turned.

'Course even then we knew that as soon as they'd promise to be peaceful the New Mexicans and other tribes would start raidin' the Navahos and stealing their women and kids for the slave trade. Slavers could make lots of money for those days, you know. So in some instances I don't blame the Navahos for risin' up again.

Then as now, our biggest problem was communicatin' with Washington. Them politicians didn't know a thing about how hard life was here on the frontier.

See, in Washington and New York the newspapers were writin' about this "Manifest Destiny" thing—how that the whites were given the New World by Prov'dence and were destined to take over the whole continent. We got as fur as Mexico City too, but finally settled for taking Texas from the Mexicans.

AYH: Today, with the advantage of hindsight, we don't blame the Indians for trying to protect their lands and homes. And when they did sign peace treaties, expecting the government to take care of them, they would starve.

C: That's what made the army generals—the good ones—so mad. They made promises to the Injuns to get 'em to sign peace treaties, but Washington would never foller through on those agreements. As soon as a treaty was signed they would forget the West, figurin' everythin' was settled. The poor critters were starvin' and freezin', I know, when they wasn't allowed to hunt or make raids.

They wasn't much of a match fur the army's muskets, I admit. But them young fellas in the army was scared. Out here in the mountains and desert, fur away from home, it didn't take much to make their trigger fingers itchy. And we'd all been taught that the Injuns was ignorant savages, heathens that wasn't real people like us. I didn't believe that. My first wife, Grass Singing, was a good woman, and her people was good. But I did think they'd all be better off livin' like the white man. Our civilization was better, after all. They could've lived in peace if they jest did what we told 'em.

I tell ye what; I don't like a hostile Red Skin ...And when they are hostile, I've fit 'em as hard as any man. But I never yit drew a bead on a squaw or papoose, and I loathe and hate the man who would. 'Taint nateral for brave men to kill women and little children, and no one but a coward or a dog would do it.[2]

See, I never joined the army to fight Injuns. I thought I would fight confederates. All I ever really wanted to be was a trapper. I was good at it. And I admired Gen. Fremont—he was a fine man. Even though they questioned our tactics in the California territory at the beginnin' of the Mexican war, I'd defend him to the death. I guess it might be considered an excuse, but I mostly jest did like I was told when it come to war. What did I know? I'se jest a trapper. I tried to resign once, but Carleton wouldn't let me.

AYH: So what is your reaction to people who call you an Indian killer?

C: I don't quarrel with that. I said it myself. It was war and I tried to be honorable in it. I did believe that it would be better fur the Injuns in the long run if they was made to stop fightin'. Sooner or later the settlers was goin' to take the land, nothin' was gonna stop that. But I tried to be honorable, a man of my word. And when I was Injun agent in Taos I tried to be fair's possible. And the Mexicans got real mad at me when I tried to stop them raidin' the Navahos and stealin' their children for slaves.[3]

AYH: Yes, the Utes and Pueblos spoke highly of you, and even some of your enemies said they respected you. But on the Navaho campaign you destroyed their homes, crops and animals to starve them into submission. Do you have any regrets about what you did?

C: 'Course I do. But when I asked for leave to go home to Taos and get out of it, Carleton said I couldn't go until I brought him 100 Navaho captives.[4]

We thought the government was gonna take care of 'em after we moved 'em to the Bosque Redondo, and they didn't. We were shocked at their condition. See, Carleton was a religious man, and he thought he had a mission to civilize the Injuns. He called Bosque Redondo "Fair Carletonia" 'til he saw the conditions there. He thought he was doin' the Injuns a favor.

Hindsight's a durn sight easier than when you're smack in the middle of the fray. We all thought we had a right to the land and we thought it was our Christian duty to subdue the Injuns. Maybe that was wrong. Now it seems we shoulda listened to 'em more. Maybe we coulda shared the land, I don't know. But at the time we thought we was doin' what

was right.

AYH: How do you feel about being a hero?

C: That makes me real uncomf'table. I done only what I thought was my duty. It shocked me when I heard about the stories they was writin' 'bout me back East. I think they done laid it on a leetle bit thick.[5] But I guess they needed heroes, or wanted 'em. Any time you're in a war, your side is heroes and th' others are villains. That's jest the way history works. You gotta take into account who's doin' the writin'. So the white men and the soldiers were written down as heroes; the Injuns were the villains. I don't think that's fair. I come up against some mighty fine fighters among the Apaches and Navahos, and I give 'em respect. They too thought they was doin' what was right.

AYH: They say you're a modest man. It seems to be true.

C: My ma taught us that it's a poor man who has to blow his own horn. I didn't get along too well with some of those puffed turkeys in the army. It galled me sometimes to have to foller their orders. But I done my duty. I guess that's how I'd like people to remember me. I done my duty best as I knowed how.

AYH: Do you have any advice for people now?

C: It's a strange world you have now, but it ain't so different as ours. I notice you say "Hispanics" fur the New Mexicans. See, we thought everybody that spoke Spanish was Mexicans. They was a lot we didn't know. You have more information, history will hold you responsible for your acts jest like us. You still have your wars goin' on, and I wonder if it ain't purty much the same as ours. Each man—excuse me, women too—has to make his own choice as to how he'll go down in history.

It's the gentle man who'll have fewer regrets, my ma told me. I reckon she was right.

***

1. *The Kit Carson Campaign*, Clifford E. Trafzer
2. *Across America*, James Rusling, quoted in *The Kit Carson Campaign*
3. *The Kit Carson Campaign*, Trafzer, p. 201
4. *The Kit Carson Campaign*, p. 111
5. *Kit Carson's Own Story of His Life*, Blanche C. Grant

Reading about Kit Carson

The Kit Carson Campaign, The Last Great Navajo War, Clifford E. Trafzer—This excellent book has just been reissued in paperback and is available in Taos bookstores; also at the Harwood library, on the Southwest shelf

Kit Carson Days - Adventures in the Path of Empire, Edwin Legrand Sabin, two volumes in the locked case at the Harwood library, excellent.

Kit Carson's Own Story of His Life, Blanche C. Grant, at the Harwood library.

Cycles of Conquest, the impact of Spain, Mexico and the United States on the Indians of the Southwest, 1533-1960, Edward H. Spicer, in the locked case at the Harwood library.

Kit Carson, A Portrait in Courage, M. Marion Estergreen, Southwest collection at the Harwood library.

Kit Carson, A Pattern for Heroes, Thelma S. Guild, Southwest collection at the Harwood library

Grass Singing - The Indian Bride of Kit Carson, Maudie Robinson; a romanticized version, not documented but entertaining; on the Southwest shelf at the Harwood library.

-Grass Singing

New Mexico's Railroads
David F. Myrick, ISBN 0-8263-1185-7
University of New Mexico Press, Albuquerque; paperback $16.95

Twenty years ago, the Colorado Railroad Museum published David F. Myrick's *New Mexico Railroads*. It filled a long-standing need for a handy, ready reference and it quickly became a minor classic. Now, after two decades of reflection, this revised edition is published by the University of New Mexico Press.

The new edition repeats virtually every line and word of the original. So it has the same sturdy structure—with strong sections on such major railroads as the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe; the Southern Pacific, and the Denver and Rio Grande Western. Smaller railroads are discussed separately, but grouped together into major functional categories: coal railroads, mining railroads, and lumber railroads. This 1990 edition still contains the quirkier aspects of the original: a short chapter on the streetcar lines in Las Vegas and Albuquerque, a chapter on rail lines in El Paso and Juarez, and an appendix with photographs of 14 ticket passes.

There are a number of differences between the two editions. Seven railroads not discussed in 1970 are included in the present volume. The inclusion of these additional railroads and the reflection of the intervening years is manifested in an index that has nearly half-again as many entries as the original. Especially welcome additions in this new edition are historic maps. You are familiar with the Maxwell Land Grant Company. How about The Maxwell Land Grand & Railroad Company? A map of the latter is included in this revised edition, as is a map of the Santa Fe Central System.

Both editions are in a hand nine-inch by six-inch format. The earlier version had large print; this edition has even larger. In sum, this is a volume that ought to be in the reference library of every person who seriously is concerned with the history of New Mexico. But it is more than just a reference book. It is an easy read and should prove to be fun for anyone who is even vaguely interested in the now-vanished railroads that are part of our past and patrimony.

Dr. Jon Nathan Young
Taos

New Mexico Village Arts
by Roland F. Dickey
Paper, 266 pages, $24.95
The University of New Mexico Press

This is like meeting an old and treasured friend after a long absence. I first met New Mexico Village Arts when it was named one of the "fifty Books of the Year 1949" by the American Institute of Graphic Arts.

The 1949 edition was produced at the University of New Mexico Printing Plant under the guidance of the author, who later became the director of the University of New Mexico Press. Helen Gentry designed the book, while Lloyd Lózes Goff did the drawings and Robert Stanford Wallace the calligraphy. A 1970 edition has long been out of print. This 1990 edition successfully retains the hand-crafted feeling of the original. It is a beautiful book in every sense.

In a second charming preface entitled "Village Arts in 1990" Dickey admits that things have changed but "Half a century of testing the pulse of the Southwest's endemic arts has not dismayed me." And how fortunate we are to have this understanding and knowledgeable guide to once again lead us through New Mexico history, manners, customs, village life and arts, via this Southwest classic.

Mildred Bruder Buchanan
Ranchos de Taos

Historical Markers in New Mexico: A Traveler's Guide
Deane C. Delgado, compiler and designer
Paper, 50 pages, $6.95
Ancient City Press

The compiler and designer of this 1990 edition is a Santa Fean and son of Sostenes Delgado, a commercial artist who worked on the first marker project in 1935. Completely revised, the current copy was edited by former and present staff at the New Mexico State Records Center and Archives. A brief summary of New Mexico history was written by Dr. Donald R. Lavash, historian with the center and former state historian Dr. Stanley M. Hordes.

If you have yearned for a traveler's guide that gave you just enough accurate and informative material to help you identify a site or plan a trip, had adequate regional maps on substantial paper, and good introduction to New Mexico history, state parks, rest areas and an index to it all—this is it.

Moreover, it will fit into the glove compartment or the front seat and is a bargain to boot.

Most official historical highway markers are located at turnouts along major highways, though many on the interstate system are grouped at rest areas and ports of entry, in the general vicinity of historical, cultural and natural interest, according to federal regulations. Texts for new markers are researched and approved by the Cultural Properties Review Committee with installation and maintenance by the highway department, with cooperation from the Travel and Tourism Bureau.

The complete text of each historical marker, as of Fall 1989, is given in five regional sections: 82 for the northwest, 71 for the northcentral, 59 for the northeast, 64 for the southwest and 50 for the southeast, for a total of 263.

Mildred Bruder Buchanan

River of Traps: A Village Life
William deBuys and Alex Harris
231 pages, photos, $19.95
University of New Mexico Press in association with the Center for Documentary Studies at Duke University, 1990.

This is the rare and beautiful account of a friendship of three men with one another, with the land and water and the villages around them over a period of some ten years. Who would ever have dreamed that two young graduates of eastern schools, a writer and a photographer, hoping in the '70s to find some creative magic in living and working in Northern New Mexico would be fortunate to find the person who would show them the way?

First they found the water and the land: a portion of the Old Trampas Land Grant, threaded through by El Rio de las Trampas, meaning the "River of the Traps" and referring to the time when the stream was laced with beaver traps to provide find hats for men in far places. At one time it must have resembled a small part of Spain or Mexico and is still called the "Place of the Early Settlers".

Best of all, they meet their El Valle neighbor, Jacobo Romero, a farmer of some seventy years, rancher, once sheep herder, as well as bootlegger, master story teller, philosopher, observer of life and political chairman. He has great pride in his land and shares his joy and knowledge with these *gringos*, who now include Anne, deBuys' artist wife.

In the meantime, deBuys is researching and writing *Enchantment and Exploitation: The Life and Hard Times of a New Mexico Mountain Range*. Harris found that Jacobo had great curiosity about his photography and came to know him as a person and friend, rather than a subject. He photographed him constantly, always seeking to capture the essence of this man who had helped them to find and pursue a different way of life. Harris was collaborating with Robert Coles on *The Old Ones of New Mexico*.

Jacobo died just a few days short of his 87th birthday. The young men to whom he had revealed so much were among the hundreds who came to pay respect to this teacher and philosopher, and something occurred that had never happened before, at least to the best of anyone's knowledge. A *gringo* photographer, Alex Harris, had been asked by Jacobo's family to give the graveside eulogy.

This book is a celebration of life on the banks of "The River of Trampas", exquisitely recorded in words by William deBuys and in superb pictures by Alex Harris. A beautiful experience for all readers.

Mildred Bruder Buchanan

A History of the Jews in New Mexico
Henry J. Tobias
294 pages, photos, $24.95
University of New Mexico Press, 1990

This is the first general study of the Jews in New Mexico available to the general reading public. Henry J. Tobias is professor of history emeritus at the University of Oklahoma and is also the author of a study of the Jews in Oklahoma.

For many years writers and speakers have generally referred to the "tripartite" nature of the population of New Mexico, meaning the Indian, Hispano and Anglo. Generally there was no breaking down the groups into nationalities, tribes or clans, so the Jews were gathered under the "Anglo" umbrella. The history of the Jews, like any other group, is a complex affair that makes for fascinating reading. They did not come in groups to New Mexico, but as individuals. They were usually single men. Often they were relatives of persons already here. Very few ever became ranchers, but were involved in the broad field of commerce and banking.

The chapter headings in this long-awaited volume are as follows: Hispanic New Mexico and Its Jewish Question; Migration and Settlement: The German Jews, 1846-60; The Golden Age of the German-Jewish Merchants, 1860-80; A Generation of Transition, 1880-1900; The Era of Quiet Change, 1900-40; The Explosive Era, 1940-1980.

You will find many familiar names in this

volume, some surprises, a lot of information, a good bibliography and index and, perhaps, a challenge to do some research and record-keeping on your own.

Mildred Bruder Buchanan

Mexico & Central American Handbook 1991
Editors Ben Box and Sarah Cameron
688 pages, $17.95
Trade and Travel Publications

If you want to visit Mayan ruins in Chichén-Itza or the pyramids in Mexico, this book will give you all the information you need for all of Mexico and Central America, from the Rio Grande to the Darién Gap.

Areas are mapped by country, region, city and town. Other than the usual travel information on transportation, restaurants and hotels, the book offers some extra information, including documentation needed, the kind of money you'll need, information on law enforcement and detailed security information. The editors tell you just about everything from where to camp and where to buy hammocks, to how to deal with the ubiquitous cockroaches, proper courtesy in Latin American countries and accepted dress so you won't unwittingly become the "ugly American".

Countries include Mexico, Guatemala, Belize, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica and Panama. This is the first year the company has separated Mexico and Central America into a single handbook instead of lumping it with South America, making room for much more detailed information about each country.

Central American and Mexican governments are proposing to link the archaeological sites of the Maya into a new system of national parks, to be called the Ruta Maya.

The editors have a high goal: "It is to be hoped that this new edition will coincide with progress under the various peace initiatives for Central America and that this will foster a desire to travel in the region."

Judy Romero-Oak

Navaho Folk Tales
Franc Johnson Newcomb
203 pages
University of New Mexico Press

Navaho folklore has been compared to the epic heroism in Homer or Virgil, though the characters are often animals. This book is a reissue of what Newcomb says was a collection of stories for her children.

"Recited with the kind of verve and affection found in *The Canterbury Tales*, they likewise convey the same kind of deep understanding of the human psyche Chaucer brings to his timeless narratives," says Paul G. Zobrod in the introduction.

Zobrod says, "...it reinvigorated my original hunch that Native Americans produced significant poetry under conditions of preliteracy. Here indeed was a volume that displayed a new dimension to American literary tradition—a dimension totally overlooked among the print-driven Europeans who brought to the New World their scriptural religion and their bookish notions of poetry."

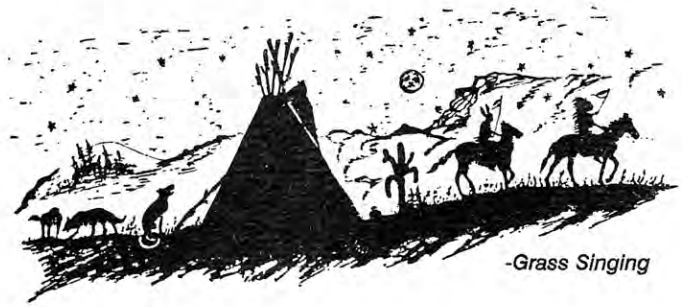
The tales of the emergence of the Navaho people (Navaho is the preferred Native American spelling) through the underworlds reads like poetry, with a deep, mantra-like simplicity.

Above all, the stories express the Native American belief that all of nature is connected, and that humanity needs the help of the animal and plant world. This same belief is expressed, though not emphasized by Western religion, in the Old Testament. Remember the story about the prophet Balaam's conversation with his donkey, which saved the prophet's life when he was too blind to see the angel blocking his way.

The stories remind us to be thankful for the animal folk who surround us. As First Man said to little Snail, "Wherever you walk you will leave a moist, shining trail to remind people of your gift to them. You shall be the guardian of all springs and will make sure that nothing ever stops the water from flowing, or makes it impure."

Our ancestors failed in the last century, thank God, in their attempts to exterminate the Navaho culture. Perhaps the poetic tradition of Navaho folklore can now remind us to respect the natural world which has been entrusted to our care.

Judy Romero-Oak



-Grass Singing

Diggings rich at morada

If you're doing a research project or if you just like to look through old books, papers or photos, an afternoon at the morada archives behind the Mabel Dodge Luhan house will put a happy smile on your face.

Victor Grant has done an expert job of classifying, filing and making order of the Kit Carson Foundation's archives there. If you ever saw the archives before Grant took over, you'll know what we mean. Boxes of papers and books were stacked everywhere, in some places to the ceiling, and it was virtually impossible to find anything. Not so now. Grant has filed everything, classified all the books neatly by subject on the shelves and brought order to the old photos--some 20,000 of them. If you can't find what you want he can usually tell you instantly where it is.

Grant is only at the morada Monday, Wednesday and Friday afternoons. If you'd like to visit, call him ahead of time at the morada, 758-5440, or leave a message for him at the Kit Carson Foundation office, 758-0505.

Some of the treasures you'll find at the morada:

- Files and scrapbooks on all the early Taos artists.
- Blanche Grant's manuscripts, some never published.
- All issues of *New Mexico Magazine* since 1932.
- *The Taos News* issues from 1910.
- Old copies of *Arizona Magazine*
- The Bureau of American Ethnology series on American Indians, 1886-1924. This is the only complete set of this series outside of Santa Fe.
- The Phil Lovato collection of water studies, with 300 maps.
- *The Photographic History of the Civil War*, 10 volumes, by Miller.
- A whole shelf of books on the Santa Fe Trail.

Among the photos you'll find:

- Churches and chapels
- Many photos of Taos Indians, Utes, Navahos and other pueblos
- Colfax County towns and places
- People like Spud Johnson and Padre Martinez.
- Mrs. Carson's paintings
- Old Taos families, people washing clothes at the river
- Early Sisters of Loretto

Grant will also have copies made of old photos for you at a reasonable price.

***

NEWS AND NOTES

Don't miss the excitement

If you didn't get to the last meetings of 1990 you missed some treats. In November Eduardo Rael treated us to his memories as a budding opera star in Taos, his world travels, and his early memories of places and people in Taos.

He reawakened a mystery with his curious experiences in the old Columbia Hotel the night before it burned.

In December Larry Torres entertained a capacity crowd at the Christmas luncheon at the Kachina Lodge with his paintings, tales and songs of early Taos Christmases.

Anthropologist Karen Young spoke at the January meeting on the ancient people of Peru.

Meetings are the first Saturday of each month. If you don't see an announcement in the paper, call a board member or officer and ask where the meeting is.

Call Corina Santistevan, 758-8333, for information.

Board of directors meetings are on the third Saturday of each month, at the Forest Service building. These meetings are open to any member of the society.

March's meeting will feature Harwood curator David Witt, who will talk about preservation of old photos and other artifacts.

In April, noted historian Marc Simmons will speak.

Thanks to the Masonic Lodge of Taos, and the efforts of Ernest Lyckman and Roger Hoakason, we now have a large hall in which to hold meetings.

New officers

New officers nominated for 1991-92 are:

Alexander Fletcher, president
Corina Santistevan, vice president
Mary Wheeler, secretary
Dora Atkins, treasurer

The membership will vote on the proposed slate of officers at the February meeting.

If you are interested in helping with the work of the Historical Society in any way, talk to one of the officers.

Sherman's book out

John Sherman's long-awaited book on Taos is now available.

"Taos, A Pictorial History" follows his award-winning pictorial history of Santa Fe, for which he received the New Mexico Governor's Award for Historic Preservation.

Everyone who has lived in Taos for any time will pore over the old pictures, recognize friends and places. It's not to be missed.

Going up

The price of AYER Y HOY has been raised to $3 per issue for non-members. Each member still receives one free copy.

Tapes of the meetings are often available for $5.

Some back issues are available. Call Judy Romero-Oak at 758-3153 for information.

Columbus

The Historical Society is working with Taos history teachers to develop a program for the quincentennial of Columbus' 1492 voyage.

If you are interested in this project, talk to an officer.

Camino Real

The Camino Real exhibit will arrive in Taos Aug. 3, and the Historical Society may have a companion exhibit.

If you're interested, call Char Graebner, 758-3861, or Curt Anderson, 758-4092.

Help save the state archives

Officials from the New Mexico State Records Center and Archives will ask the legislature this year for money to build a new building. They are asking for everyone's help with the project.

The legislature appropriated money to buy the site for the new building in 1989, but in 1990 did not approve funding for construction.

Deputy director Sue Osborne is asking everyone to contact their legislative representatives and let them know that you support the project. **Call Sue Osborne at 827-8860 for more information.** She has a beautiful brochure explaining the problems and history of the present building.

The present building has been closed several times for problems ranging from a potential fire hazard due to a faulty electrical system and a gas leak. In 1989 a structural engineer determined the building to be overloaded and the floors overstressed. It was remodeled from a wool warehouse built in 1934.

Osborne says the state risks losing its written history if it doesn't continue to support the project.

Osborne said many people don't realize that all the statehood documents from 1912 to the present are in the archives. It's a treasure trove for history lovers. Some of the other collections in the archives:

- The Spanish archives from 1621-1821
- Mexican archives from 1821-1846
- Territorial archives from 1846-1912
- Land records of New Mexico, including all of the land grants made by the Spanish and Mexican governments
- Private papers dating from the early 17th century.
- Geneological records: census and church records dating to 1689.
- Photo collection, historic film collection and a map collection.

If you'd like to visit, the archives building is at 404 Montezuma, at the corner of Montezuma and Guadalupe, near Sanbusco Center.

Culture lectures

You can learn more about the culture and society of Northern New Mexico in a series of free lectures at the Harwood Foundation.

The Southwest Hispanic Research Institute Center's Department of Anthropology has scheduled four lectures, beginning Jan. 31 with Tey Diana Rebolledo on "Three Nuevo Mexicana Writers: Fabiola Cabeza de Baca, Cleofas Jaramillo and Nina Otero Warren."

Other lectures:

Feb. 28: Enrique Lamadrid, "Folkloric Expression of Indo-Hispano Relations"

March 28: Tobías Durán, "The Barelas Oral History Project"

April 26: Ted Jojola, "Tourism Futures and Pueblo Stakes"

***