AYER Y HOY en TAOS

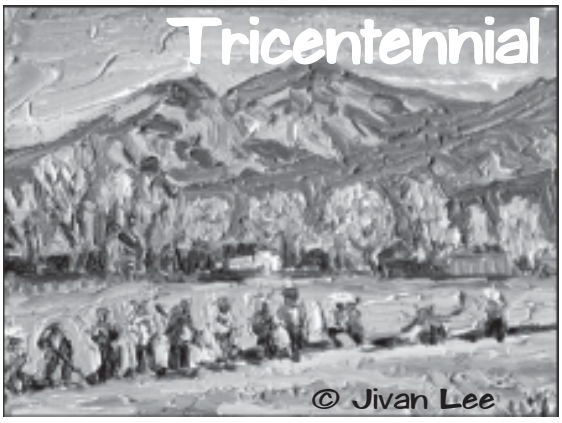
Yesterday and Today in Taos County and Northern New Mexico

Spring 2015 Issue #38

100 Years of The Taos Society of Artists

Back row: Ufer, Dunton, Higgins and Adams. Seated: Hennings, Phillips, Couse and Berninghaus. Kneeling: Sharp and Blumenschein. Missing: Critcher and Rolshoven

Acequia de Los Lovatos: Tricentennial 1715 to 2015



The Partido System of New Mexico

A publication of the Taos County Historical Society

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Taos County Historical Society's publication, Ayer y Hoy en Taos - Taos County and Northern New Mexico, is published semi-annually by the Historical Society.

We invite articles of a scholarly nature, as well as book reviews of recent publications pertinent to the Taos and northern New Mexico area. We are open to publishing occasional reminiscences, folklore, oral history and poetry that are of historical interest.

The Taos County Historical Society endeavors to maintain high standards of quality in AYER Y HOY, and we seek to make improvements as we go along. Readers' comments and suggestions are welcome.

AYER Y HOY is distributed to all members of the Taos County Historical Society as a benefit of membership.

Editor
Dave Cordova

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.

P.O. Box 2447 • Taos, New Mexico 87571

A Message from the TCHS President

Dear Members,

The TCHS Board of Directors would like to invite everyone to the various events that the Society will be hosting throughout the year. In 1915, the Taos Society of Artists was formed by six men who loved the light, colors and beauty of Taos. This year we celebrate this auspicious event, commemorating the original members of The Taos Society of Artists that was formed 100 years ago by Oscar E. Berninghaus, Ernest L. Blumenschein, E.Irving Couse, W. Herbert "Buck" Dunton, Bert Geer Phillips, and Joseph H. Sharp.

Taos County Historical Society will be honoring Virginia Couse-Leavitt, granddaughter of E.I. Couse at our annual luncheon in May. Barbara Brenner, granddaughter of Oscar E. Berninghaus, will be our featured speaker.

We also celebrate the 300th Anniversary of the Los Lovatos Acequias. Our board member Juanita Lavadie has been working very diligently on the history of the Acequias and she has an article in this issue. A lecture on the Los Lovatos Acequia will be presented on September 12th as part of our regular lecture series.

Yet another celebration this year is the 200th Anniversary of the completion of The San Francisco de Asis Church in Ranchos De Taos. The fall issue of Ayer y Hoy will feature articles, stories and photos of the historic church since 1815. Visit our website to see the schedule of events for this important event.

We are sad to report the passing of a very important contributor and active member, Albert John Atkins Jr. We have lost a true friend of the Society. John, as he was better known, passed away on March 21, 2015, surrounded by his entire family. We extend our sincere condolences to his wife, Dora, and the entire Atkins family.

Everyone at the Historical Society hopes you have enjoyed the wonderful programs and lectures so far, and we look forward to bringing you more interesting programming and lectures in the future. We invite you to join us for our monthly lectures on the first Saturday of every month at the Kit Carson Electric Coop Board Room, 218 Cruz Alta Road at 2:00pm. We encourage everyone to invite your families, friends and neighbors who are interested in the lively history of Taos to join us and become members of the Society.

This and future issues of Ayer y Hoy will be distributed via e-mail to our members to help conserve paper and costs. The Society will provide printed copies to anyone who requests or prefers a printed copy.

Ernestina Cordova, President
Taos County Historical Society

Taos and the American Art Colony Movement: The Search for an American School of Art

by Virginia Couse-Leavitt

ONE DAY in SEPTEMBER, 1898, Bert Phillips and Ernest Blumenschein drove their wagon into the village of Taos for the first time. It was fate, not design, that led them there, but they were both so captivated by the town, its picturesque people and beautiful environment, that it became their spiritual and literal home. Phillips immediately decided to settle in Taos and Blumenshcein made plans to return as soon as possible. This early permanent commitment to Taos gave Phillips and Blumenshein the distinction of being the actual founders of the art colony, although Henry Sharp had just spent two summers painting there.

A year after their arrival, Phillips wrote to Blumenschein, who had gone to Paris for further study, saying:

> ... if (our) your, I mean, scheme goes through, we can come together better prepared for a mutual aid to each other. You and Butler with new experience of the world and I with the necessary local knowledge including Spanish. We'll be... like the group of Barbizon painters and writers... (Phillips file, Fenn Archive, letter dated Sept. 25, 1899. Ellis Parker Butler was a writer and friend of Blumenshein.)

It is clear from this letter that Phillips and Blumenschein, having once discovered Taos, intended to form an art colony there. Taos had the perfect combination of elements necessary for a successful colony. The amenities of the town, crude as they might have been, provided the means for daily living, while the nearby Pueblo provided ready access to Indian models. Combined with these two elements was an incomparable landscape and an extraordinary quality of light. Henry Sharp, who divided his allegiance between Taos and the Crow Agency in Montana, also mentioned Barbizon in a letter. He wrote from Taos on June 15, 1906, to the Director of the Cincinnati Art Museum:

> ... you see, we are at our first love and stomping ground. Bert Phillips is here year round. Couse has just bought a little place, fitted up a studio and is at work, and likely for many summers. Young Berninghaus of St. Louis has just left and Curtis and Sauerwein and others are coming, so there may be a Taos colony a la Barbizon yet! (quoted by Forrest Fenn in *The Beat of the Drum and the Whoop of the Dance*, pp. 201-202)

In referring to Barbizon, both Phillips and Sharp had invoked the name of the most famous of the French art colonies. Founded in the 1830s, Barbizon became the prototype for all art colonies to follow, representing freedom from urban pressures, communion with nature, and a spirit of camaraderie. The colony at Barbizon developed as a result of the new interest in painting directly from nature. Thus it became the general habit of French artists in the late 19th century to desert the their Paris studios during the summer months and retreat to small villages where they could live inexpensively and could gather motifs for their future work. Certain locations gained in popularity and thus became artists' colonies. With later developments in plein-air painting, particularly as influenced by the Impressionists, many other art colonies were established in France, including such famous locations as Giverny, Pont-Aven, Concarneau, and Etaples. Many of the Americans studying abroad experienced life in one or more of these French colonies. It is not surprising then that an art colony movement developed in the United States after these students returned.

Phillips, Dunton, Sharp, Berninghaus, Couse & Blumenschein

The establishment of art colonies in America began in the mid 1880s. Their popularity lasted into the 1920s and began to wane in the 1930s. It was, however, at the very period that the Taos Colony was established, around 1898, that the proliferation of American colonies was at its height. At that time colonies were also established in Pennsylvania at New Hope, in California at Laguna and Carmel, in Connecticut at Cos Cob and Old Lyme, in Massachusetts at Provincetown and Gloucester, in New York at Woodstock, and in Indiana at Nashville. These are but a few examples of a movement that reached into all parts of the country. In speaking of this proliferation of colonies as a "movement" we are not, of course, referring to a stylistic movement, but simply to an identifiable social phenomenon among American artists at this particular period of history. Yet, there was an almost subconscious ideology common to the art colonies in America: the desire that American artists of the period felt to create a uniquely American art. Unfortunately, until recently their accomplishments have been underestimated and even disparaged. The remainder of this article will be devoted to an examination of the impact of art colonies in general on American art, and of how Taos, in particular, fits into this overall picture.

There was nothing new in the fact that American artists were going to the countryside for their summer work. The Hudson River valley, for instance, had long been the summer haunt of painters in the early 19th century. These artists painted grand

panoramic hymns to the American wilderness, but did so in relative isolation. Beginning in the mid-1880s, however, artists preferred to gather into colonies where they began to paint intimate, personal landscapes as a result of their experience in France with Barbizon and Impressionist plein-airism.

E.L. Blumenschein, J.H. Sharp, B.G. Phillips, O.E. Berninghaus, W.H. Dunton & E. I. Couse

In the late 19th century there were no art schools in this country that could compare with the art academies of Europe. American art students, therefore, considered study abroad as an absolute necessity and by the 1880s and 90s American names swelled the rosters of Munich and the Parisian academies. When these young artists returned to the United States they suffered a great sense of culture shock. As students they were nourished in an atmosphere where art was venerated; but when they came home, they found people preoccupied with commercial, rather than with artistic, development. They turned therefore to each other in an attempt to recapture and reinforce the creative stimuli they had experienced in Europe. This camaraderie could, to some extent, be accomplished in the cities and in the great studio buildings that were built in New York at this time, such as the 10th Street Studio, the Sherwood Building, and the Van Dyck. These buildings were in essence urban art colonies and provided artists with living and working space during the winter season. However, most of the artists turned to rural communities and the countryside for their subject matter, just as their European mentors had, and so they began to establish regional summer art colonies.

At first some of these artists were unable to come to terms with American subject matter. In an article entitled, "The Summer Haunts of American artists," published in 1885 in *The Century Magazine*, the author gives us a glimpse into the nostalgia felt by painters at Easthampton on Long Island, on of the earliest of the American colonies. Writing about the subject matter to be found in Easthampton, the author observed that:

> Mr. Smillie finds here a likeness both to England and Holland. The gardens and orchards, the lanes, barns, and shrubbery, are all English; while the meadows stretching to low horizons, the windmills... are Dutch. Mr. Jones, on the other hand, is struck by the resemblance of the locality to Brittany. Mr. Bruce Crane, too, is carried straight to Pont-Aven by the hay-ricks and poultry yards, and by the soft gray atmosphere.

Figure painters found few substitutes for the picturesque peasants of Barbizon or the colorful Breton fisherfolk. In an attempt to further extol the attractions of Easthampton, the author added that:

> Nowhere on our coast can be found quainter houses and people, fishermen more available as models... or men of more isolated lives and rugged individuality. Nantucket is not more unique or Brittany more poetic. (by Lizzie W. Champney, v. 30, Oct. 1885)

Critics despaired that Americans had been forced to turn to Europe for their technical training and decried the fact that American painting, because of this, lacked a distinctive national character in a review of the American section at the Paris Exposition of 1900, one critic lamented that:

> Despite the extent and excellence of the exhibition, there remains the somewhat depressing fact that its works in the main are not national, do not exemplify American spirit or reflect American life.

This same critic also noted sorrowfully that:

> In faithfully and sympathetically depicting American landscape and in adequately representing our hamlets, and our great cities, we have comparatively few masters. (Ellis T. Clarke, "Alien Element in American art," *Brush and Pencil, v. VII, no. 1, October 1900*)

This paucity of artists "sympathetically depicting American landscape" was remedied, however, with the proliferation of art colonies throughout the United States at the turn of the century. American artists began consciously to strive for an American School of painting. Significantly, it was to subject, not style, that they turned in their quest, and the landscape was their primary source of subject matter. "The spirit of place," a phrase borrowed from D.H. Lawrence, who wrote, "Every continent has its own great spirit of place," *Art in America*, v. 62, Sept./Oct. 1974; also *Art in New Mexico, 1900-1945: Paths to Taos and Santa Fe*, 1986, p. 13) From these art colonies across the country began to come an intimate American portrait: the upland pastures of Branchville; the sand dunes of Provincetown and the rugged coast of Gloucester; the woods and harbor of Old Lyme; the winding lanes and rail fences of Brown County; the brilliant flora of Laguna and the blue-green water of Carmel. It is obvious that the Taos and Santa Fe painters added their own special dimension to this rich depiction of America.

In a 1915 article for *Fine Arts Journal*, Birger Sandzen, a Rocky Mountain artist who spent some time in Taos and Santa Fe and who was elected to the Taos Society of Artists in 1922, wrote about the Southwest in comparison to other locations:

> As a sketching ground the Southwest... can offer the painter abundant material of every conceivable character. He will find... all those friendly, quiet little motives that everybody loves and admires and understands, the Barbizon-Woodstock theme and its many variations. The East and West have many of these charming subjects in common, although the atmospheric effects peculiar to the high plateau of the Southwest give them a somewhat new setting.

His defensiveness about the parallels between western and eastern scenes lead us to believe that paintings from the west were somehow suspect to the eastern establishment. Later in this same article Sandzen praised the uniqueness of the Southwest:

> It is neither possible nor necessary to describe the great romantic wonderland of the Southwest, its rugged, primitive grandeur, its picturesque people, its scintillating light and mystic color. The spell of this fairyland is quite irresistible. Once under its magic influence, the artist will hardly be able to break away, even if he cared to do so. (v. 30, "The Southwest a s a Sketching Ground.")

When the Taos Society of Artists began to exhibit nationally as a group, some critics heralded the arrival of an "American School." A reviewer for the *New York World* wrote in 1920:

> In that desertland a real school of American art has developed, which is equally distinctive and worthy. Prospective colonies elsewhere may well take pattern by this example of what may be done by determination and persistency... these painters have presented that region with artistic truth and vigor. It is one of the notable exhibitions of the season. (Feb. 1, 1920)

Taos was unique among the American art colonies because the Indian and Spanish peoples provided a colorful subject matter for figure painters, an authentic American alternative to the peasants of Barbizon and the fisher-folk of Brittany. The figure studies coming out of east and west coast art colonies were often genteel, langorous women, impressionistically painted in house and garden settings. In a much quoted paragraph, Ernest Blumenschein voiced the boredom that Taos artists had felt with the hackneyed European subjects of windmills and peasants, as well as with "lady in negligee reclining on a sumptuous divan... "(El Palacio XX, no. 10, May 15, 1926). Blumenschein's cry was for a vigorous, unequivocably American subject matter, and he and his fellow Taos artists felt they had found this in the American Indian. American Indians, like Millet's peasants at Barbizon, were the victims of social change. The depiction of their rich culture and noble character signified not only the documentation of a vanishing race, but also a social comment on the effects of materialistic modern society. The Taos Indians were an ideal substitute for picturesque European subjects. The fact, however, that Indians were, and have remained, inexorably exotic and alien to Anglo-European society, had tended to obscure the fact that the Taos painters themselves were very much in the mainstream of American art at the time.

In an enthusiastic review of the 1918 exhibition of the Taos Society of Artists, a critic for the *Boston Herald* praised the exhibit saying:

> Whether as art or as pictorial record of a primitive culture... This exhibition is one that everybody will want to see.

He then, however, made the following prophetic observation:

> That phrase "love of subject" suggests possibly the liability that the Taos movement, interesting as it is, may never culminate in the illusive American school." (Jan. 6, 1918)

The inescapably dominant role of northern New Mexico's vivid imagery was acceptable as long as strongly representational art was still considered desirable. Julius Rolshoven was enthusiastic about Taos and Santa Fe when he arrived there in 1916. He was quoted in the *Detroit Free Press* saying:

> I have traveled all over Europe and Northern Africa in search of atmosphere but nowhere else have I seen nature provide everything, even the conception, as it does in New Mexico. (Jan. 20, 1918)

E.L. Blumenschein, B.G. Phillips, J.H. Sharp & E.I. Couse in the Couse Gardens.

Stuart Davis, however, a younger American artist who was steeped in the intellectualization of modernism and more interested in style and formal concerns than in representation, found New Mexico's environment too domineering. He complained that, "You always have to look at it," and that the forms were "made to order, to imitate."
(quoted by Eldredge, *Paths to Taos and Santa Fe*, p. 169)

In a period of our art history when an "American School" was being sought in the "place" that was America, the Taos artists were able to make a significant contribution to American art. Ironically, however, it was in an abstract movement, the Abstract Expressionism of the 1940s, that a great American School was finally critically recognized.

It is important to make a few brief observations about style in relation to American art colonies. Impressionism was the most pervasive and enduring influence evident in the style of work produced in east and west Coast colonies. None of the American Impressionists, however, were drawn to Taos, although, interestingly enough, Robert Reid was one of the founders of the Broadmoor Art Academy in Colorado Springs and Ernest Lawson taught there as well. Artists influenced by Cezanne, on the other hand, did settle in Taos. Cezanne's geometrical style was clearly compatible with defining, synthesizing quality of light and rugged geometry of New Mexico, whereas the dissolving and scintillating reflections of Impressionistic technique were not. It must be recognized, however, that Impressionism did influence, to some degree, all artists of the period, and Taos artists were no exception. The brilliance of their palettes and their ability to capture New Mexico's extraordinary light, owed much to the example of the Impressionists. Nevertheless, it was the Post-Impressionists with whom the Taos artists had the most affinity, sharing with them an interest in structure, an emphasis on the decorative, a broad style of painting, and an admiration for primitive art.

Let me end by quoting a critic writing in 1920 for the *New York Tribune:*

> An interesting question is raised by the exhibition which is being held by the Taos Society of artists at the Milch Gallery. The members of this body are frequenters of a corner of the northern part of New Mexico, where the Taos Indians supply the artist with picturesque models... Painters who have lingered there have become thoughtful students of customs and manners that command respect. But does Taos do anything talismanic for its devotees? Granting that place and people are paintable, is there anything about either the one or the other which will give the artist any special advantage? ... One is driven to some such reflections as the foregoing by the very fact that the Taos Society of Artists should exist as a society. It asserts itself as though it were entitled to a certain singularity. Yet it has accomplished nothing singular.

The c r it i c continued his review with compliments to the work of Couse, Rolshoven, Blumenschein, Higgins, and Ufer, but then resumed his former theme:

> None of them, however, appears to have captured the one thing justifying such extensive travels—none of them has achieved beauty. They all have manual dexterity. They are all skillful in the bold delineation of those broad effects, full of sharp contrasts, characteristic of Taos. And they all wake doubts as to whether those effects are worth while. Taos, we fear, will not become a great artistic shrine until it has been put on the map by a great artist. (Feb. 1, 1920)

We do not know what this critic's criterion for beauty was. He may have been a progressive looking for new ways for beauty to be exposed through more modern conceptions of style and structure, or he may have been a conservative, disturbed by the "broad effects and sharp contrasts" he mentioned as being characteristic of Taos, and unable to find in them any poetic beauty. It doesn't really matter. What does matter is that such criticism has never been satisfactorily answered. The questions he raises are still significant to art historians who with the additional prespective of sixty-five years, continue to reexamine the position of New Mexico painters in the history of American art and to reassess their contribution to the art of their time.

Taos and the American Art Colony Movement: The Search for an American School of Art by Virginia Couse-Leavitt reprinted from Ayer y Hoy Issue #4 from Winter 1987

THE HOLLYHOCKS

By Bertha and Francis Quintana

The hollyhocks that grow throughout New Mexico are native to Asia and belong to the mallow family. The hollyhock plant was brought to the new world by the Spaniards in the sixteenth century to dye their wool. They called them *Malva Loca*.

There are several varieties of hollyhocks. All varieties of hollyhocks do well in full sun with light shade and grow in almost any soil. They are drought-tolerant plants. They grow best along fences and along walls of structures; for support from the wind and for some light shade. They germinate quickly and are up and growing in a matter of days. Hollyhocks choose their life styles to conform with their surroundings. Conversely; some annuals become biennials and some biennials become perennials in regions where winters are mild.

The red-alcea rosea, a variety of the mallow family grows five to nine feet high and bear masses of bright red blossoms, which normally grow attached to a single stalk. Their leaves can grow ten inches across and ten inches from stem to point. The leaves grow smaller as they get to the top of the plant. They bloom from mid-summer to fall. This is the most common species in Talpa, New Mexico.

Today you can see different varieties of colors and make-up of hollyhocks growing everywhere. The common alcea-rosea which Spaniards called *Malva Loca*, is called "La Varita de San Jose," (St. Joseph's Staff).

Acequia de Los Lovatos: Tricentennial

September 20, 1715-2015

by Juanita J. Lavadie - Parciante of the Acequia de Los Lovatos

ACEQUIA DE LOS LOVATOS:
TRES SIGLOS DE CORRIENTE

La Historia — En el año 1715, una carta fué enviado al, Gobernador Flores Mogollón, pidiendo apoyo asunto la Petición (land grant) de Francisca Antonia Gijosa, Viuda del difunto Antonio Moya. La carta fué asunto de algún tierra de pastura, adentro del Valle de Taos, mantenido por Bartolomé Romero, ya difunto. Las stipulaciónes por el recipiente de dicho tierra era que el mismo recipiente debía ocupar su residencia allí entre seis meses.

El día 20 de septiembre, 1715, el Alcalde e Taos, Juan de la Mora Pineda, verificó, indicando que dicho terreno se sentaba al Norte del camino del medio para el Monte Pícuris, hasta "las Piedras Negras", al oeste. Y "la toma de la acequia" al este. Al testimonio, tiempo después, dió conocimiento que esa misma acequia mensionada, era la Acequia de los Lovatos, saliendo, de origen, del Rio Pueblo. Era una acequia en uso desde ántes de la fecha documentada, acequia en uso hasta hoy mismo.

ACEQUIA DE LOS LOVATOS:
THREE CENTURIES IN THE MAKING

The Story— In 1715, Governor Flores Mogollón in Santa Fe received a letter concerning a petition for land grant in the Taos Valley, submitted by Francisca Antonio Gijosa, widow of Antonio Moya, deceased. The property in question was grazing land in the Taos Valley, granted to Bartolomé Romero, deceased. The stipulation for receipt of the land grant was that it needed to be occupied as residence within six months.

On September 20, 1715, Taos Mayor Juan de la Mora Pineda, wrote a letter of response to the Governor that identified the boundaries of the Land Grant as south from the Camino Del Medio going to Picurís, west to the black rocks, and east from the acequia which was already in use, documented and identified as the Acequia de los Lovatos.

Front cover photo: "*Cleaning the Acequia*" by Jivan Lee
9" x 12" - Oil Impasto on Canvas
(Heinley Fine Arts - 119 Bent Street - Taos)

A REFLECTION ON THE EVENT:

Today's acequias are living testament to the communal cooperation that ensured village survival by cooperating with the arduous task of digging the course for water flow for village agricultural needs and for plants and livestock. Without an acequia, survival chances of the early Northern New Mexico villages were drastically diminished in the harsh climate environment of the arid altiplano and the alpine mountains.

The democratic process, in sharing for growing sustenance to feed families and provide the agricultural *efectos del paíz* for barter, predates the Constitution of the United States of America. Acequias continue to survive and still provide for the sustenance of the same villages and neighborhoods. This year, the Acequia de los Lovatos commemorates three hundred years of official recognition. If the acequia was already running, one can imagine all the communal labor that had already transpired within the community before that official date. The Tricentennial is a vital testament to a thriving community and a thriving tradition.

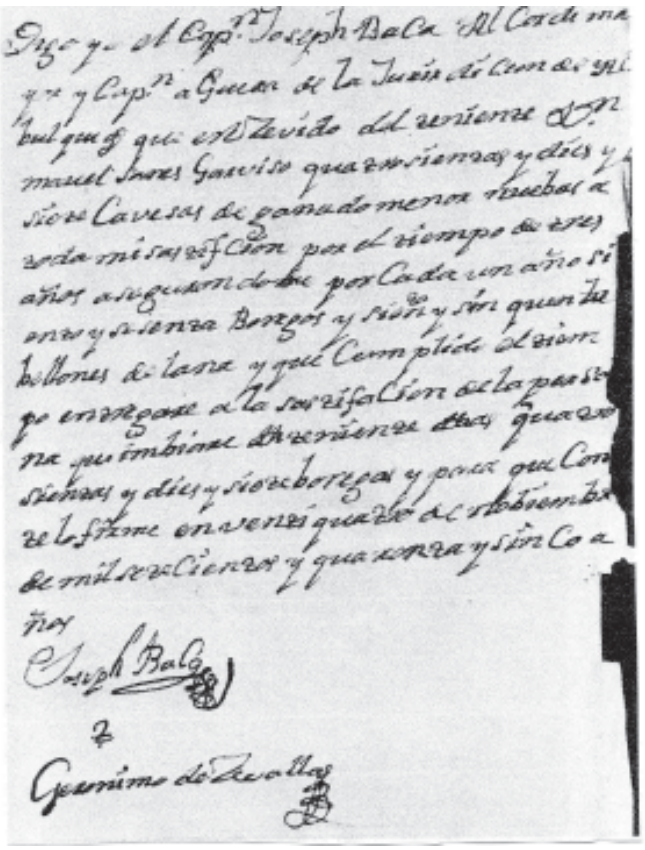
With this milestone event, the Acequia De Los Lovatos would like to share the celebration with the public at large. Please check the TCHS website and Facebook page for scheduled public events throughout 2015. Photo by Anita Lavadie.

CITATION INTERPRETED/*CITACIÓN TRADUCIDO*: SPANISH IRRIGATION IN TAOS VALLEY,
A study prepared for the New Mexico State Engineer Office, Santa Fe, NM, Author: John O. Baxter, September 1990, pg 7.
Source: New Mexico State Records Center and Archives, Volume I, no. 468,

The Partido System In New Mexico

by Michael Miller

One of the most successful agricultural and economic systems adopted in colonial New Mexico has its roots in the biblical past. Known as the *partido* system, this pastoral institution is first mentioned in Genisis 30:32 when Jacob asked compensation from Labon "in black lambs and brindle goats" for tending his father-in-law's flocks. This same custom was brought to Spain in the 14th century and eventually found its way to the New World. In New Mexico, it became a method of lending capital (sheep) at interest. Here is how it worked. In most cases, the owner turned over a certain number of ewes to the *partidario* (sheepherder). The *partidario's* obligation was to make annual payments of lamb and wool to the *patron* (usually 20%). At the end of the contract, the partidario returned the original number of ewes back to the owner. After three to five years the *partidario* was able to build up his own flock and often doubled the sheep in the herd.



The first introduction of domestic sheep into *Nuevo Mexico* began in the 16th century with the expedition of Francisco Vasquez de Coronado. In 1540, Coronado began his long and difficult march north to the Zuni pueblos with a large number of horses, cattle, and sheep. Because of the slow pace of the sheep, Coronado decided to divide the expedition and proceed north without the livestock. In the rough country on this journey many of the pastoral animals actually lost their hooves and had to be abandoned on the trail. Only 28 sheep arrived at Zuni in August, 1540, but another flock, which arrived in Bernallilo in the winter of 1540-41, is said to have fared better. According to expedition chronicler, Pedro de Castenada, one thousand horses, five hundred cattle, and five thousand sheep ultimately survived the journey. Archival records from the expedition of Juan de Onate, in 1598, listed 1,000 cattle, 1,000 goats, 150 mares, and 4,000 sheep at the start of the journey. During this seven month trek livestock suffered greatly again, mainly from lack of water, except when the occassional cloudburst occurred like the one near Socorro which created a large pool of water that saved much of the Onate herd. Because of this natural phenomenon this place is still known today as *Socorro de Cielo* (Help from the Sky). The extreme and harsh conditions along the trail, however, reduced the livestock herds considerably. Due to the ingenuity of New Mexico's first colonists these herds rebounded quickly in the early years of settlement. Spanish documents record that by 1601, cattle and sheep herds at the pueblo of *San Juan de los Caballeros,* New Mexico's first capital, had increased again to over three thousand head and that cattle provided the meat supply for the next year, which allowed for sheep herds to focus on breeding and wool production. Gradually, sheep herds multiplied and prospered in the province in spite of the difficult and harsh environments they endured. Between 1601 and 1680, (the start of the Pueblo Revolt) several political maneuvers by self-serving Spanish officials created another decline in sheep production in the province, when large flocks were moved to other parts of northern New Spain and were sold or traded. It was not until Diego de Vargas became governor that the sheep industry in New Mexico began to evolve and become a vital part of the agricultural economy.

The sheep that Governor Vargas divided among New Mexico's pioneer families in the spring of 1697, were similar in breed to those brought by Coronado and Onate. The breed was known as *churro* and they were descended from the sedentary flocks of southern Spain whose bloodlines can be traced back to Roman times. *Churros* adapted well to the high desert environments of northern New Spain, including Nuevo Mexico. The wool could be processed by hand with basic shears and carding tools and the meat was tasty and nutritious for human consumption. The rugged *churro* could survive on morning dew and succulent plants for drinking water for long periods of time and they lasted longer than cattle in times of severe drought. Although it took some time to re-establish the sheep industry in the province the *churro* breed proved more than adequate for survival in the harsh environment of Nuevo Mexico.

The increased use of the *partido* system continued to play an important role in the growth of the sheep industry in 18th and 19th century New Mexico. *Partido* contracts

became more numerous and detailed and included provisions to cover unforeseen circumstances such as disease, lightning strikes and Indian raids. Larger flocks made management of the herds more difficult for the owners. *Partido* contracts helped spread the responsibility for the livestock and provided employment without wage payments in a region with little or no cash. Sheep owners could pursue other interests with this shared responsibility, merchants who accepted sheep for goods and supplies prospered, and widows and children who inherited large flocks were able to manage them thanks to *partido* contracts. Church organizations such as *cofradias* (lay brotherhoods) also utilized *partido* contracts. For example, *La Cofradia de Nuestra Senora del Rosario La Conquistadora* in Santa Fe accepted sheep as dues for membership. *Partido* contracts also benefited frontiersman who were short of capital because it offered them an opportunity for economic advancement. By 1750, sheep ranching had made important strides and the industry was approaching strong economic stability. Thanks to the success of the *partido* system, the vast pastures, adequate water supplies, and the establishment of new export connections, sheep ranching was on its way to becoming the region's most important industry and a leader in *Nuevo Mexico's* agricultural growth.

In 1827, Jose Augustin de Escudero, an attorney from Chihuahua, compiled a livestock census and report for Mexican Governor Narbona on *Nuevo Mexico.* In his report he documented 62,000 head of sheep in Santa Fe, 155,000 head in Albuquerque and 23, 000 head in *Santa Cruz de la Canada*. He praised the *partido* system as a highly successful creation of private enterprise and called it the economic salvation of the poor man in a province that left, "no paupers in New Mexico." Escudero observed that the herds had thousands of ewes and at least ten breeding rams which were never separated from the main herd. As a consequence of this practice there would be a high birth rate of new lambs almost every day throughout the year. The shepherd would force the ewes to suckle these newborns without the difficulties of large numbers of new offspring in early spring when the weather was difficult and mortality rates were high. The shepherd would then give the *patron* ten or twenty per cent of these sheep and the required amount of sheared wool as interest, preserving the capital of both parties in the contract. This *partido* policy was unique to *Nuevo Mexico* from other countries that practiced *partido* and it worked well for both parties for many decades.

The *partidario* (independent stockman) was then able to negotiate a contract for future increase of the flock with the overseer at a good market price even when currency was involved in the transaction. With the currency the *partidario* earned he could build his family a house, hire shepherds to help care for the larger flock, and shear wool for other necessities. The wool was then spun by

Pastores cutting sheep from the flock. The *partido* system was a very successful enterprise for *Nuevomexicanos* during the Spanish and Mexican periods. It provided income and a good living for citizens who were willing to work hard and work with the community.
Credit: A.M. Bergere Collection, NMSRCA

family members and used to make blankets, stockings, and coats for the family. These items were also sold for added income and extra wool was sold or traded for garden produce. The milk and the meat from the flock, which increased in numbers over the years, also sustained the *partidario's* family. Eventually, when the flock was large enough, the *partidario* could enter into a *partido* contract with his neighbors and they could increase their economic stability with a little hard work and patience. Escudero recommended the continued support of the *partido* system in his report to Governor Narbona and Mexican government as a successful and stable contribution to the growth and stability of the agricultural economy in the province of *Nuevo Mexico.*

During the Mexican period and into the early part of American occupation, sheep husbandry expanded in northern New Mexico and southern Colorado. The climate and topography of southern Colorado was similar and the grasslands of *El Rio Conejos* and the *San Luis* valley attracted *pastores* to the north. One of the first to arrive in San Luis around 1851, with a sizable herd of sheep, was Jose Hilario Valdez. He spent three years building his flock in San Luis and moved to Guadalupe following an Indian raid on San Luis. Another pioneer to the region was Dario Gallegos who had an adopted son, J.C.L. Valdez who had inherited a flock of 26,000. Luis Montoya came up the Rio Grande and established another large flock north of San Luis in the Culebra range. Later he moved them west near

present-day Del Norte. Antonio Jose Duran, Jose Francisco Salazar, Rafael and Tomas Atencio, Francisco Lujan and Pedro Lobato established herds in the Los Pinos valley.

The sheep industry began to expand in earnest after the discovery of gold in Colorado in 1858, when thousands of immigrants flocked to the diggings to make their fortune. *Nuevo Mexico* became the source of their meat supply. Thousands of sheep arrived in the Colorado mining camps from the south and the traffic continued to build in the north as more miners and their families arrived. Pedro Armijo of Albuquerque brought 12,000 head to Colorado in a single drive. Sheep trails were established in southeastern Colorado as well. Large drives were herded over Raton, La Veta, and Mosca passes. For decades *Nuevomexicano* sheep ranchers dominated the industry in northern New Mexico and in most parts of Colorado. This expansion changed the exchange of sheep from a largely trade economy, to a cash transaction. In the early stages of these transactions a new custom was established by *Nuevomexicano* sheep owners because of language and cultural differences.

Sketch of Uncle Dick Wooten with part of his flock on the Old Spanish Trail on his way to Sacramento, California. Credit: H.D. Bugbee

Most of the buyers for the mining enterprises were English-speaking businessmen from the East, who spoke little or no Spanish. A veteran *Nuevomexicano* sheepman who contracted to sell 5,000 head at $1.00 per head devised this new system of exchange with the newcomers. He stationed himself at the cutting gate in the corral where the sheep were held with the *gabacho* buyer at his side. As the sheep passed in single file, he made the buyer drop one silver dollar into his hat as each animal ran through the gate. He controlled the movement of the flock and stopped the sheep in their tracks if the coins failed to match the number of *borregos* as they ran by. Some of the local elders in the region today refer to this system of exchange as the "catch" register.

New markets opened for New Mexico sheep ranchers in California as well. The discovery of gold in California also increased the population there and the demand for food supplies, including mutton, sky-rocketed. The success of the *partido* system in New Mexico made the territory a major player in sheep ranching. In 1*860*, a government census enumerated 75,000 sheep in Taos county alone, by 1880 that number increased to 186,000 head. This demand prompted newcomers like "Uncle Dick" Wooten of Taos to enter the sheep business. Wooten, a former fur trapper and mountain man purchased 9,000 *churros* from local herders in the Las Vegas area. Wooten headed to the San Luis valley with his flock and followed the Old Spanish Trail across Colorado and Utah. His stock brought $8.75 per head in Sacramento, California. Other *Americanos* entered the sheep business following Uncle Dick's success. These include Kit Carson and some of his investors like Lucien B. Maxwell and John W. Hatcher. Like Wooten, Carson followed a northern trail to Fort Laramie, Wyoming and then on to Sacramento. Carson's stock sold for $5.50 a head, much less than Wooten's profit. Still, Kit Carson considered his venture a great success.

With the arrival of capitalism and the implementation of new policies by the United States government, during the territorial and statehood periods of New Mexico history, the *partido* system began to change dramatically. The introduction of the railroad to *Nuevo Mexico* opened up new markets for livestock delivery and attracted *Americanos* eager to prosper in the mercantile business. Land speculation increased and prices for grazing and range land went up in price. The newcomers, well versed in capitalistic and legal procedures, began to acquire large portions of Spanish and Mexican land grants that once supported the *partido* system in the former Spanish and Mexican province. The Office of the Surveyor General and the Court of Private Land Claims established a legal system of land tenure that gave *Americanos* and others involved in land speculation the tools for written documentation that would stand up in the American court system. This factor placed *Nuevomexicanos* in a distinct disadvantage in litigation involving land tenure because Spanish and Mexican law relied on ancient methods of land distribution based on Roman and Muslim methods of managing land. These traditions focused on community land ownership, rather than private property rights and survey plats like the U.S. system of land tenure.

Thomas B. Catron, who was appointed Attorney General of the Territory of New Mexico in 1869, was the most notorious land speculator of the day. He used

all the tools of legal chicanery to his advantage and to the benefit of his clients. He personally gained the rights to 34 land grants, with a total of three million acres, making him the largest land owner in the history of the United States. He also represented clients in 63 land grant cases involving millions of acres that were once available to *partidarios* and their flocks. Among his clients were Frank Bond and Edward Sargent who were the most powerful sheep dealers in the *Rio Arriba.*

By 1915, Frank Bond and his brother George owned and invested in eleven stores in northern New Mexico. In Espanola, they owned the Espanola Mercantile Co. and the Espanola Milling and Elevator Co. He also owned the Rio de las Trampas Grant. Credit: H.O. Bugbee

Frank Bond, emigrated from Canada to New Mexico territory in 1882. He developed strong connections with the Santa Fe Ring (Catron's select group of land speculators) shortly after his arrival. Bond and his partner Sargent obtained permanent grazing permits to public lands, that were once communal land grant parcels, and rented them out to *Nuevomexicano* sheepherders who were unable to find traditional grasslands for their flocks. If they wanted to graze their sheep they were forced to sign up for *partido* contracts with new rules and payments. The contract stipulated the rental of a certain number of ewes for a three to five year period, an obligation to buy all supplies at the Bond Co. in Espanola, and his other stores in northern New Mexico, at inflated prices, and high interest rates for the "privilege" of using grazing lands that were traditionally free and communal. These *partido* contracts left the *partidario* in deep debt after the contract expired. This Amercanized system was similar to peonage and has been compared by some scholars to sharecropping used in the South by former plantation owners following the Civil War. These two American entrepeneurs and other businessmen were pleased with this new *partido* system because it provided security against the loss of company-owned stock. It also provided a good supply of cheap, experienced, and unwilling, but often necessary, docile labor for the Bond Company.

New Mexico's sheep industry began to decline rapidly in the 20th century. Increasing imports of meat and wool from other parts of the nation began to arrive in New Mexico, via the railroad, at much lower prices, from other parts of the nation. Demand for beef also contributed to the decline in the sheep industry. The depletion of grazing lands for sheepherding by state and federal legislation, restrictions to the use of water holes and *ojitos* (springs), and laws that supported fencing and restrictions to free range grazing all contributed to this decline. The Great Depression was the final blow to New Mexico's centuries old dominance of the sheep industry, only vestiges are beginning to emerge again in the *Rio Arriba,* like the admirable efforts of Tierra Wools in *Tierra Amarilla,* the Manzanares family, and other small farmers and ranchers in the region.

Michael Miller is a writer and poet from La Puebla, NM. He is a contributor to TAOS: A TOPICAL HISTORY, 2013 and the author of the award winning book, MONUMENTS OF ADOBE, 1992.

The Art of Taos

The arts are everywhere in Taos, and I think it is because of what Taos inspires. The people who have been in this area the longest practiced their art by making pots, baskets, jewelry, drawings, clothing, and other items for trade. The people that immigrated here brought certain artistic talents that they adapted to the area. The Spanish and Mexicans were very creative in the way they worked the area's soft woods into furniture and carvings. All the peoples of the valley were entertained by the various musicians, singers and dancers, which is art in its own right. Living in the rugged Taos Valley was made all the more bearable and enjoyable because of these artists in our little corner of the world.

Then, in 1898, the art of the big world came calling. Because of a broken wagon wheel, Taos was put on the world map of art. Joseph Henry Sharp was already a regular to Taos, and he lured Bert Geer Phillips and Ernest Leonard Blumenschein here. They, in turn, were responsible for the many artists from world renowned schools and academies who would come to make Taos their home.

This year marks the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Taos Society of Artists by the Taos Six: Berninghaus, Blumenschein, Couse, Dunton, Phillips and Sharp. Six talented artists who didn't just come and take the spirit of what Taos is, but became Taoseños who contributed to the essence of Taos and lived the rest of their lives here.

Lectures, Field Trips & Special Events

June 6, 2015 - TBA

July 11, 2015 - Field Trip to
The Molino de los Duranes - Ranchos de Taos

August 8, 2015 - Field Trip to
Cañoncito de Manuel Andres Trujillo

September12, 2015 - Lecture
"Los Lovatos Acequia - 300 Years"
Sylvia Rodriguez

October 3, 2015 - Lecture
"Ernest, Mary & Helen Blumenschein"
Elizabeth Jo Cunningham

November 12, 2015 - TBA

December 6, 2015 - Holiday Luncheon
Dr. Thomas Chavez

First Saturday of the month at 2:00 PM
Kit Carson Coop Meeting Room
118 Cruz Alta Road - Taos

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The Taos County Historical Society was formed in 1952 for the purpose of "...preserving the history of the Taos area." This part of New Mexico has a fascinating history, full of people, events, stories and places.
If you are interested, we invite your participation in our field trips or lecture programs, or by supporting the Society by becoming a member.

BECOME A MEMBER

We invite your participation and support through an annual membership, which includes subscriptions to "*Ayer Y Hoy*" and our periodic newsletters. Other activities include recordings of oral histories, maintaining archive materials and participating in community events.

Membership categories:

Student	$10
Individual	$20
Family	$30
Sustaining	$50
Business	$75
Lifetime	$500

To become a member send a check, along with your name and address, to:

TAOS COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
P.O. BOX 2447 - TAOS, NM 87571

For more information call (575) 770-0681
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