

# AYER Y HOY en TAOS

Yesterday and Today in Taos County and Northern New Mexico

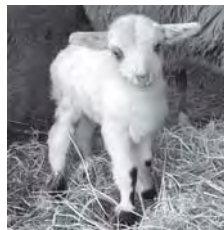
Fall 2017

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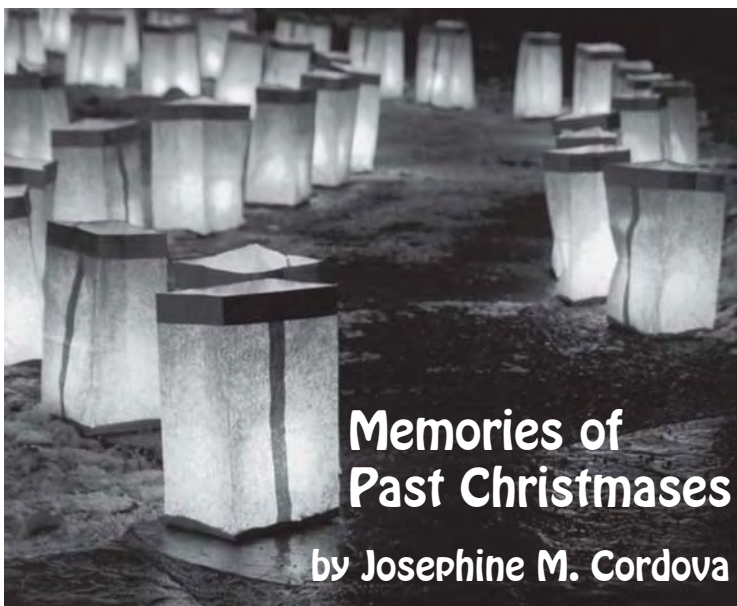
## Governor Juan Bautista de Anza II 55th Governor of New Mexico by Dr. S. Pauline Anaya



## Prehistoric Taos: A General View by Skip Keith Miller



## The Sheep in our Past by F.R. Bob Romero



## Memories of Past Christmases

by Josephine M. Cordova

## Colcha Embroidery: A Brief History

by Irene  
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de Martinez



## A Place Like No Other

by Thomas A. Romero

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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.

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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.

### Officers of the Board

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

## A Message from the TCHS President

Dear Friends, Members of the Taos County Historical Society,

Fall is upon us and soon the Holidays will be here.



The Taos County Historical Society (TCHS) kicks off the Holiday Season in grand style with its Annual Christmas Luncheon featuring Dr. S. Pauline Anaya's presentation about the travels of Juan Baptista de Anza, the Kings' Governor of New Mexico in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century.

This year, the TCHS had a very productive year with a series of lectures that included: "Growing Up In Taos" by Mirabai Starr; "My Grandpa Painted

Pictures" by Barbara Brenner; "Pueblo Lifeways & Traditions" by Marlon Magdalena; "Famous & Unusual Gravesites" by Dr. Richard Meltzer; "The Taos Plaza: History, Myth & Memory" by Sylvia Rodriguez; "Route 66 in New Mexico" by Baldwin Burr; "Not So Long Ago: Life in Pot Creek Lumber Mill Camps" by David Maes and "The History of Bataan in World War II" by Major General Kenneth Nava. A field-trip to the Hacienda de los Torres was the highlight of the summer.

The TCHS is looking to partner with the Taos County Commission to create a Taos County Museum, a quality museum that all Taoseños can be proud of and visitors to Taos will find informative. With the museum in mind, TCHS board members went on a field trip to the Los Alamos Historical Museum and observed and listened to words of encouragement from Dr. Judith Stauber, Museum Director. Heather McClenahan, Executive Director of Los Alamos Historical Society also spoke to us and gave us a tour of their museum. As we get closer to working on setting up a Museum, we have a lot of work ahead of us, and we will reach out to the TCHS members and community for ideas and assistance. It will require a lot of in-kind hours, so please plan on helping us if you can.

Our membership is growing tremendously. Thank you to everyone that has contributed to our growth; together we will continue to grow, learn and prosper. We will continue with the wonderful lectures and special events so please encourage your friends and neighbors to join our society.

Our Board of Directors work together for the good of the Society and our Taos community. I continue to cherish our relationship and the special talents that each member shares with all of us. I want to thank Corky Hawk for the many years that he has given to the Society as Chair of the Preservation Committee. Corky has now stepped down and Mark Henderson will replace him as Chair. We wish our best to Mark and we are very confident that he will also do a fantastic job. Congratulations Mark!

We hope that you find the articles in this issue of Ayer y Hoy enjoyable and informative.

*We want to wish everybody a very  
Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!*

Ernestina Cordova, President  
Taos County Historical Society

# “Governor Juan Bautista de Anza II, 55th Governor of New Mexico” by Dr. S. Pauline Anaya - © 2017

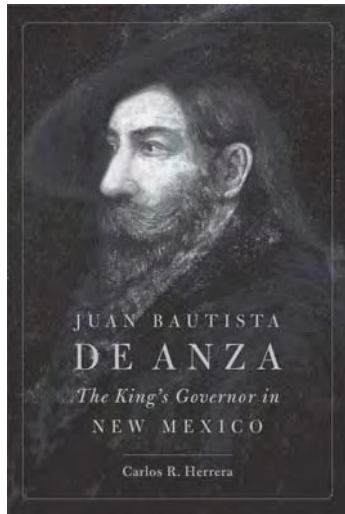
Spanish Colonial Governor Anza was born in Fronteras, Sonora New Spain (today Mexico), in 1736 near Arizpe, to a military family living in the Northern frontier of New Spain, and the son of honorable Juan Bautista de Anza I, who was killed in battle, leaving behind his family and young son, Anza II, who as soon as he could, enlisted in the military, in 1752.

By 1769-70, the Portola Expedition began colonizing Alta California, in the San Diego and Monterey areas. The Spanish desired of a more direct land route and of reinforcing their presence in Alta California, as a buffer against the colonizing efforts of the Russians in the North American Continent, who were advancing from the north. Spain wanted to possibly establish a harbor that would give shelter to Spanish ships. In 1772 Anza, proposed an expedition to Alta California to the Viceroy of New Spain.



On January 8, 1774 with three padres, 11 servants, 20 soldiers and 240 animals (horses, mules, cattle), left Tubac Presidio heading south, through Yuma tribal lands. Anza established good relations, as much as possible, with the Indians. He took the route along the Rio Altar (Sonora/Sinaloa) crossing the Colorado River at the confluence of the Gila River, reaching Mission San Gabriel Arcangel, near the California sea coast on March 22, 1774. They continued on to the Capital of Alta California at Monterey Mission on April 19. They returned to Tubac in late May, where he was promoted to lieutenant-colonel and ordered to lead a group of colonist to Alta California.

The new expedition of colonists got on their way October 23, 1775 and arriving at San Gabriel Arcangel in January 1776, after having suffered greatly during the winter months. After recuperation, the colonists continued on to Mission Monterey in Alta California. Then Anza with Padre Font, with second in command Jose Joaquin Moraga and eleven others, continued North to found the inland route on March 25, 1776, as described by explorer Portola. Pressing on, Anza located the sites for the Presidio de San Francisco, and the Mission San Francisco de Assi.



On return from his successful expeditions, he left in charge Jose Joaquin Moraga and returned to Mexico City, and in August 22, 1777 he was appointed as the Governor of the Province of Nuevo Mexico (<http://en.Wikipedia.Org>).

Juan Bautista de Anza arrived in Santa Fe at a time when New Mexico faced threats from Indians and International rivals. As governor of New Mexico from 1778 to 1788, Anza enacted a series of changes in the colony's governance that helped preserve it as a Spanish territory and strengthen the larger empire to which it belonged. Anza holds great historical importance as a soldier and administrator in the history of North America.

As a historian, Dr. Herrera states that Anza's formative years in Sonora, Mexico, contributed to his success as a colonial administrator. Having grown up in New Spain's northern territory, Anza knew the daily challenges that the various ethnic groups encountered in this region of limited resources, and he saw both the advantages and the pitfalls of the region's strong Franciscan presence. Anza's knowledge of the frontier helped make him a more effective military and political leader.

When raiding tribes threatened New Mexico, during his tenure as governor, Anza rode into battle killing the great Comanche war Chief Cuerno Verde in 1779 and later engineering a peace treaty in 1786. As the colonial overseer of the imperial policies known as the Bourbon Reforms, he also implemented a series of changes in New Mexico's bureaucratic, judicial, and religious institutions. Anza curtailed the social political and economic power that the Franciscans had long relished and increased Spain's authority in the region.

By combining administrative history with narrative biography, Herrera shows that de Anza II was more than an explorer. Devoted equally to the Spanish empire and to the North American region he know so well, Governor Anza shaped the history of New Mexico at a critical moment.

Herrera, Carlos R., *Juan Bautista de Anza The King's Governor in New Mexico*. 2015. University of Oklahoma Press. ISBN-10:0806146443. Above review by: HGRC Herencia Journal: Vol.25-Issue 3, July 2017.

The ANZA Society International sponsors an annual conference to further the understanding of the life and times of Juan Bautista de Anza. The 23<sup>rd</sup> Anza Conference 2018, will be held in Taos, New Mexico on May 17-19, 2018. Proposed annually is a Thursday early evening registration and reception. Friday field trips to important historic sites of the area, with an evening dinner and speaker. On Saturday are workshop/lectures on research and findings of significance and interest, with an evening dinner and speaker. Preliminary plans are for hotel accommodations at the Sagebrush Inn. Membership not a requirement to attend, we encourage attendance. Visit our website at [AnzaSociety.org](http://AnzaSociety.org). 2016-18 President, S. Pauline Anaya, Psy.D.



The mission of the Juan Bautista de Anza Society International is to celebrate the times and life of Lt. Colonel Juan Bautista de Anza, Presidial Capitan de Nueva Espana. Anza, explorer, leader of the founders of San Francisco, peacemaker and Governor of New Mexico Territory. Since 1995 an annual international conference has been held in Arizpe, Sonora, Mexico (the home town of the Anza Family in America); San Francisco, CA., Pueblo, CO., Yuma, AZ., Hermosillo, Sonora; Santa Barbara, CA., Tucson, AZ, Magdalena de Kino, Sonora; Santa Fe/Albuquerque, NM; Tubac/GreenValley, AZ, Monterey, CA; Banamichi/Arizpe, Sonora, Alamos, Sonora, Mexico, and Calexico, CA.,. Our 23<sup>rd</sup> Annual Conference is being planned for May 17-19, in Taos, NM. All are welcome to attend! Visit [www.AnzaSociety.org](http://www.AnzaSociety.org)



On March 12, 2017, the Anza Society, Inc. Board of Directors unanimously passed a resolution of support for the Anza Legacy Project and namely Bob DeWitt and John Anderson of Colorado, in this effort. While this project is new in name, it continues to build on the work of past members of the Anza Society to include scholars such as Don Garate, Ron Kessler, Jer Zybera, Joe Myers, Wilfred Martinez, Phil Valdez and many others.

Furthermore, Spanish descendants of various research and historical organizations support efforts to promote true history. We know from various records that ancestors of Wilfred Martinez were on the expedition and Francisco Domingo Anaya was the only person killed in the line of duty on the 1779 campaign.

On Sunday, August 15, 1779 the 55<sup>th</sup> Spanish governor of New Mexico, Juan Bautista de Anza departed Santa Fe along the Camino Real on an arduous 27 day campaign in search of Comanche Indian chief Cuerno Verde, who had been raiding villages and creating havoc across the northern frontier of the Spanish Empire.

To further the research and understanding of Anza and this dramatic event which would forever alter the course of history affecting much of what is now northern New Mexico and southern Colorado, the Anza Legacy Project desires to define the route of this expedition to include the location of campsites and battle sites. Furthermore, the Anza Legacy Project desires to establish an Anza / Cuerno Verde National Historic Trail along this corridor.

The historic preservation of this route is vital in a number of aspects. Our Spanish heritage is seldom understood or taught in the primary educational system. Acknowledgment needs to be given to the Native American tribes to include the Ute and Jicarilla Apache who accompanied Anza on this expedition. Additionally, the Comanche are a vital part of this story.

The definition of this important corridor throughout northern New Mexico and southern Colorado will not only create a greater understanding of Anza and our Spanish heritage, but additionally, the interest created can only help benefit communities located along this route resulting in increased tourism. We look for supports and advocacy of our efforts, Join Us!



## *Thank you from the Taos County Historical Society :*

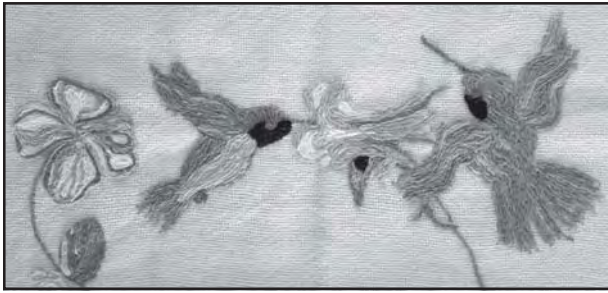
- To John and Barbara Ramsey of Los Alamos, NM, long-time members of the TCHS, for their generous donation of a large collection of books by Fray Angelico Chavez. This collection is a great addition to our existing library and will benefit the Society and the citizens of Taos in our goal of preserving our history.*
- To our members for the very generous donations in the Memory of Dora Atkins and Bill Harrison. Your donations will be used to further the goals of the Society. We encourage all our members to consider making donations in the memory of family and friends or donations in any one's name as a gift.*
- Especially to the TCHS Membership for your continued support.*

*Merry Christmas  
and a  
Happy & Prosperous New Year*



# COLCHA EMBROIDERY: A BRIEF HISTORY

by Irene Brandtner de Martinez



Embroidery by Connie Fernandez

*Colcha* embroidery, the Spanish embroidery of the Rio Grande Valley of New Mexico, is found as far south as Las Cruces, as far southwest as Silver City, and as far north as southern Colorado.

There are various stories about the beginning of *colcha* embroidery. First, we know that the women of Spain had a centuries-old tradition of embroidery. In New Mexico, for a couple of centuries, they were limited to wool. The most logical story is that, as the wool blankets developed holes which were caused by moths or wear, the ladies would embroider a flower

or an animal to cover the hole. With time, the blankets became a thing of beauty. At this point, some embroiderers began to plan designs to embroider on a blanket. In the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, and throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century, *bordados* (embroideries) were used in churches as altar cloths, altar carpets and wall hangings.

In New Mexico, the word "*colcha*" (a Spanish word that means bedspread and sometimes quilt) has been used daily in our speech since the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Contrary to popular belief, "*colcha*" still means bedcovering to us. Embroideries are simply called *bordado*, and that includes: *bordados de algodón* (cotton), *bordados de lana* (wool), and others. Embroidery textiles like *sabanilla* were called *sabanilla labrada* (*labrada/o* refers to the decoration). The use of the word *colcha* for these embroideries started in the 1930s with Anglo women's interest in the colorful embroideries seen on bedspreads (*colchas*) and altar cloths. Today, a *colcha* embroidery is an embroidered textile made in the Rio Grande Valley in which the *colcha* stitch is predominantly used.



Embroidery by Connie Fernandez

Embroideries are generally divided into two categories: wool-on-wool and wool-on-cotton,

both of which are popular today. The wool-on-wool pieces are dated from 1800-1850 and are mostly made from handspun Churro wool (woven as *sabanilla* for the backing and as natural dyed yarn for embroidery). The *colcha* stitch is ideal for total coverage, because most of the beautiful embroidery yarn is on the surface of the *sabanilla*, rather than wasted on the back. While total coverage is characteristic of early pieces, many embroiderers today prefer to reveal the beauty of the *sabanilla* itself.



Embroidery by Connie Fernandez

By 1850, due to increased American trade, cotton cloth and imported yarns had largely replaced the hand-woven *sabanilla* and handspun yarns. These materials gave rise to wool-on-cotton embroidery, the second category. Spanish-American embroiderers again adapted creatively as they had once adapted to their new land and new ways in 1598. The totally embroidered wool-on-wool embroidery was replaced by wool-on-cotton embroidery with isolated motifs.

## THE ART OF "COLCHA EMBROIDERY"

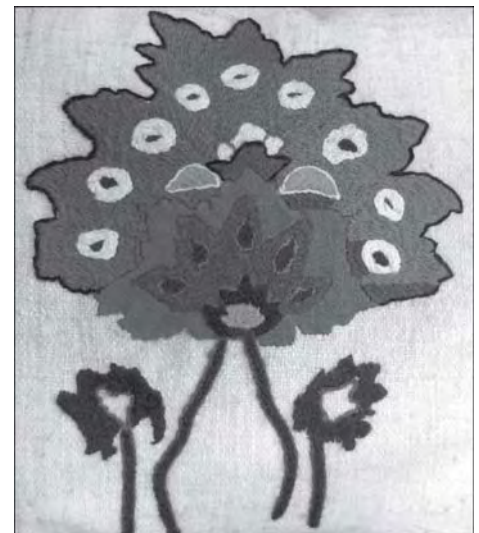
Introduction to this vintage art form has been an inspiration to continue, (in a small way) the life, of a tradition started many years ago by women in Southern Colorado and Northern New Mexico. In the early years, women processed wool from sheep herds the family owned. After the wool was spun, they then created blankets using the "Colcha Stitch." Now, in modern times, the work is more decorative.

I, personally have made pillows, wall hangings, shawls and suit jackets; which become wearable art. This art form can be traditional to contemporary; capturing a wide range of imagination and creativity of the "*Colchera*."

Isabel Nestora Sisneros-Bringas

In both its traditional and contemporary forms, *colcha* embroidery expresses the heart and imagination of its maker (the "*bordadora*.") In today's chaotic world, for me and many others, it also provides a period of meditative peace, while simultaneously creating something beautiful, reflective or intriguing. It is a joy to preserve and pass on this cultural treasure.

Connie Fernandez

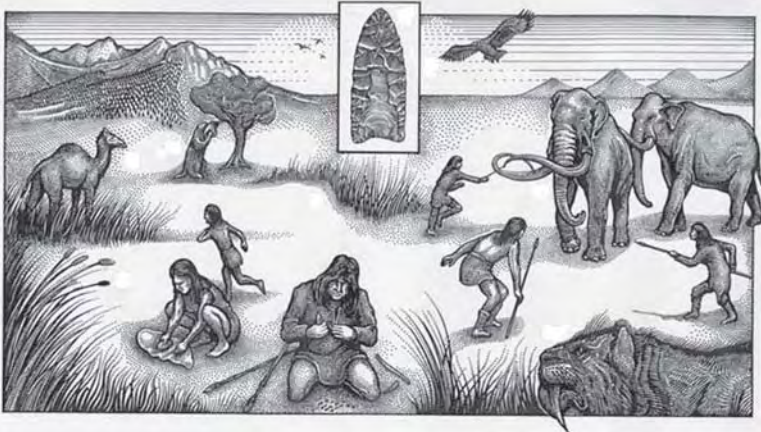


Embroidery by Isabel Nestora Bringas

# PREHISTORIC TAOS: A GENERAL VIEW

## by Skip Keith Miller

Beautifully crafted stone spear points found here and there in the Taos Valley suggest that Paleo-Indians, essentially big game hunters, were in the valley sometime between twelve thousand and eight thousand years ago. This period coincided with the end of the last ice age, when the climate of this high valley-7,000 feet above sea level-would have been considerably cooler and wetter than it is today. Quite likely, remnant hanging glaciers shrouded the peaks and upper slopes of Taos Mountain and other peaks in the Sangre de Cristo Range.



Mammoths, mastodons, giant buffalo, and a variety of other mega fauna grazed and foraged the thick vegetation of the valley and would have been important food sources for small nomadic bands of Paleo-Indian hunters and their families. Only a few spear points produced by these ancient peoples have been unearthed in Taos Valley, and so far no actual kill sites have been identified. However, north of Taos, in the San Luis Valley west and south of the Great Sand Dunes, numerous Paleo-Indian sites have been excavated and studied.

With the progressive warming and drying of the climate at the end of the last ice age, the Taos Valley underwent a gradual change from a more thickly forested landscape of spruce, fir, and pines (primarily limber pine) in the upland and foothill areas and, in the valley, from a cold desert steppe environment dominated by mixed scrub (including sagebrush) and grass, to that of a spreading grassland. The end of the ice age coincided with the extinction of the largest animals as well as many of the region's once-abundant smaller mammals, such as camels and early horses.

The relatively small population of humans still in the area continued to evolve and develop strategies for survival. Locally, they shifted their hunting emphasis to the plentiful smaller game: deer, elk, antelope, bears, birds, and rabbits. At the same time, they began increasingly to utilize wild plant foods, including piñon nuts, grass and herb seeds, fruits, berries, roots, and all variety of potherbs-edible green plants. This transition marks a major cultural change from the dominant hunting strategy of the earlier Paleo-Indians to what archaeologists call Archaic Culture or hunter-gatherer culture.

This adaptive response to the changing environment of the northern New Mexico region resulted in the development of several distinctive Archaic cultural traditions. These Archaic people relied for survival on making seasonal rounds. Small bands of hunter-gatherers moved through the various ecological zones of the region making use of their seasonally available resources. For instance, the extensive piñon-juniper forests that skirt the lower slopes of the mountains and foothills of the area produced extraordinary quantities of piñon nuts in the early fall. These plentiful nuts have an extremely high nutritional value and fat content. Partly for this reason, Archaic hunter-gatherers set up camps in the piñon forests in the fall, where they would also have collected other seeds and berries, hunted game, and fished the numerous streams draining the surrounding high mountains.

Based on the profusion of stone artifacts-spear points, chipped stone cutting tools and associated debris, and grinding implements-found in tremendous quantities over hundreds to thousands of square meters of land, archaeologists have recorded numerous ostensible seasonal camps in the valley. Both the quantity of artifacts and the large geographical extent of Archaic Period sites indicate that the temporary camp locations may have been used repeatedly by countless generations of hunter-gatherers. In fact, the indigenous Archaic Culture manifestation of the Taos area seems to have become established sometime around seven to six thousand years ago and continued until just one thousand years ago. As the Archaic Culture peoples were essentially semi-nomadic, their homes may have consisted of brush-and-pole wickiups, or tent-like structures, possibly prototypes of the easily transported skin-lodges (tipis) utilized by many prehistoric and historic tribes of the Great Plains and inter-mountain regions.

Between about A.D. 950 and 1050 the first permanent settlements were established in the Taos Valley. These early, year-round residents built deep pit-house dwellings. Using simple wooden digging sticks, they often excavated pits that ranged from six to more than eight feet below the surface and were from thirteen to twenty or more feet across. The pit houses were roofed with a cribbed or layered arrangement of piñon and juniper poles covered with a thick layer of plant material and several feet of dirt. All this was supported internally by a framework of large posts and beams, similar in configuration to the earth lodges of the Great Plains. Access to these completely subterranean structures was from a stepped-pole ladder through a central hole in the roof.

The early inhabitants also fabricated two very different types of above-ground structures. One type consisted of rooms made of coursed adobe mud walls. This technique built up twelve- to eighteen-inch-thick layers



of relatively stiff adobe mud, just as a potter coil-builds a pot. (It was not until more than 500 years later that the Spanish introduced the use of blocks of sun-dried adobe). The second construction technique is called *jacal*. It utilized a wall system fashioned from a woven framework of sticks and branches completely filled and covered with mud.

These ingenious, labor-intensive pit houses took full environmental advantage of the year-round constant ambient temperature of the earth. In the dead of winter the temperature of the ground below the frost line (typically no more than 24 to 30 inches deep) stays at a uniform 52 degrees Fahrenheit. Therefore, when the outside temperature dropped to below freezing, a small fire in the pit house could easily keep the inhabitants comfortable. Likewise in the summer, as temperatures climbed into the 80 and 90 degree Fahrenheit range, these subterranean homes maintained their constant 52 degrees.

In the southern portion of the Taos Valley, in Ranchos de Taos and Pot Creek, the pit houses tended to be round with associated small *jacal* surface units, while those built in the northern area of the valley, in Des Montes and Valdez, were square or rectangular with course adobe surface structures.

Who these early permanent residents were and where they came from is still debated among anthropologists and archaeologists. The first pottery associated with the earliest pit houses have attributes that clearly identify it with the prehistoric Woodland cultures of the Great Plains located far to the east of the Rocky Mountains: elongated “baglike” shapes and incised bands of simple lines and/or herringbone patterns as decoration. The distinctly non-ancestral Pueblo character of Taos’ earliest ceramics supports the hypothesis that small groups of people from the Plains, which are less than thirty miles as the crow flies from present-day Taos Pueblo, moved over the low mountain pass and took up residence in the valley. Interestingly, deep pit houses containing the same style of incised pottery and dating to exactly the same time period are found in both the Cimarron Valley and Trinidad, Colorado, areas.

It is equally likely that simultaneously there may have been Archaic Culture people still living in the Taos area. To complicate the questions of cultural origins, black-on-white painted pottery, the hallmark of the Ancestral Pueblo culture, seems to appear either concurrently with or very shortly after distinctly Plains-like incised and utilitarian plainware (undecorated) ceramics.

What this collection of mixed archaeological evidence-differing shapes of pit houses and associated surface structures, and especially diverse pottery types-suggests that early permanent settlements of the Taos Valley may have been comprised of three very separate cultural groups. One was an indigenous hunter-gatherer population that was still maintaining an archaic, semi-nomadic way of life. Another may have been a Plains-adapted Woodland culture folk. The third, an Ancestral Pueblo people, may have merged to develop an entirely new culture that incorporated the best of each of their separate survival strategies. This remarkable amalgamation of people could have been a factor in establishing Taos as a vital crossroads and important trade center connecting the numerous indigenous cultures of the Four Corners region to the west, the Rio Grande Valley to the south, the inter-mountain region to the north and the Great Plains to the east.



By A.D. 1100 numerous small pit house village sites, comprised of from two to five households, were scattered throughout the Taos Valley in areas adjacent to permanent water and arable land. Agriculture began to take on a more significant role in sustaining the people and helping to alleviate, to some extent, a dependency on hunting and gathering of natural resources. Over the next 150 years the population in the valley continued to increase, and above-ground adobe pueblo structures slowly replaced pit houses. There also was a trend toward population aggregation and, therefore, larger villages developed through time.

Between about A.D. 1250 and 1350, three (and possibly more) very large, multi-story pueblo great houses had been built in the area. Throughout this time period there appears to have been a gradual

immigration of new peoples, possibly related culturally to both the original Plains and ancestral Pueblo settlers. This influx must have necessitated a continuing restructuring of social organization in order to accommodate the multicultural components of the newly evolving cooperative communities.

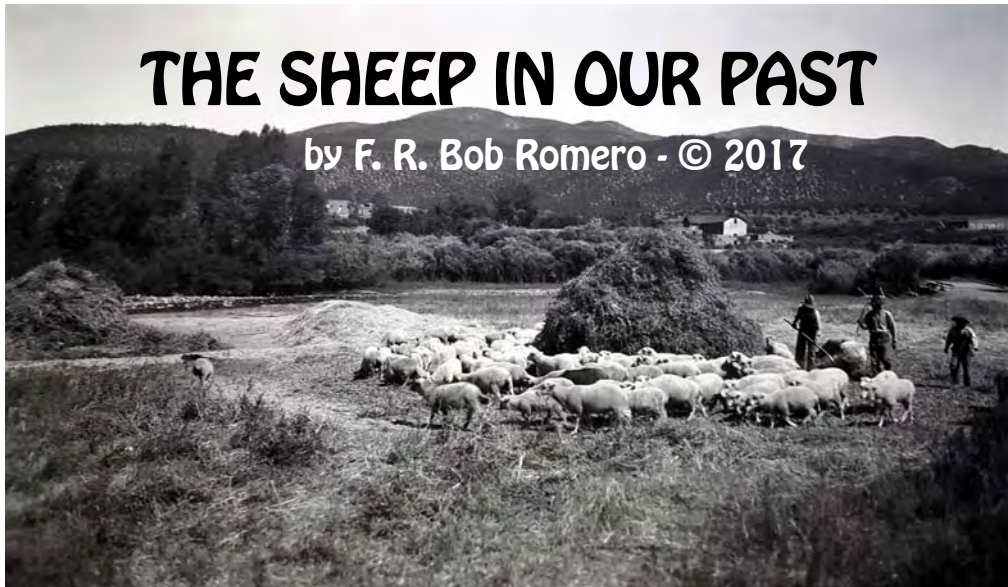
Some time after A.D. 1350 construction began on Taos Pueblo, the only surviving great house in the valley. The pueblo has been almost continuously inhabited ever since, making it one of the oldest permanent communities in North America. According to Taos Pueblo tradition, the pueblo was originally constructed as a large fortress with a thick wall more than twelve feet high completely surrounding the village and with five watchtowers at its corners.

The people of Taos Pueblo still speak Tiwa, an ancient language that linguists have classified as a developmental branch of the Kiowa- Tanoan family of languages. Although related to Tewa (the language of the six Pueblos located between the contemporary communities of Española and Santa Fe) and Towa (the language of Jemez Pueblo), Tiwa also has a direct relationship with Kiowa. This linguistic evidence further supports a possible northern and eastern, Plains origin for at least some of the early permanent inhabitants of the Taos Valley.

During prehistoric times the great citadel of Taos Pueblo, because of its strategic location and diverse cultural roots, became an important inter-regional trade center. This lively trade was possible because of a long established network of trails.

# THE SHEEP IN OUR PAST

by F. R. Bob Romero - © 2017



In the present day, Taoseños and Norteños can see a few sheep in distant corrals or nearby pastures, but in the past several centuries Taos County and Northern New Mexico had many sheep (ovejas) grazing in verdent pastures and lush mountain ranges. Before the Spaniards explored and colonized New Mexico in the sixteenth century there were no domesticated sheep in the area. Through the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries there existed only a moderate number of ovejas that had been brought from Spain through Mexico.

Beginning in the early 1800s, the number of sheep in “El Norte” grew dramatically, and in the mid to late 1800s the churro sheep population in New Mexico exploded.

The sheep industry began to grow when Governor Juan Batista de Anza confronted the Comanche Nation in the plains in the late 1700s and through military action and diplomacy created an alliance that tamped down raiding by the nomadic tribes of the Hispano villages and Indian pueblos. This détente allowed for the ceding of new land grants in Northern New Mexico. The Spanish speaking population increased significantly, and then the Partido system that had originated in Spain was fully implemented. A person that owned sheep would lease a certain number of sheep to a Partidario who assumed full responsibility for a certain number of years, and then paid interest in wool and lambs to the owner. When the contract ended he returned the same number of sheep in the same condition and age that he had received them. In four or five years a Partidario was able to grow his own flock of sheep and provide for his family. Severino Martinez moved from Abiquiu to Taos in 1804 and by 1827 owned 1,200 sheep. At this point in time sheep raising families were able to not just survive, but they were able to begin to thrive.

By the middle of the 19th century the number of sheep in New Mexico continued to grow and numerous families owned more than 1,000 sheep. When the gold rush to California occurred in 1849 New Mexico farmers were able to trail their bovid ruminants to California and sell them for a profit.<sup>1</sup>

Many New Mexican families such as the Martinez, Torres, Mondragon, and Chavez families continued to raise sheep primarily for subsistence. These families as well as others grazed their ovejas to feed their growing population and they also would spin and weave the wool for their clothes and for other needs.

After American sovereignty in 1848 new markets developed. According to a government census in 1860 75,000 sheep were counted in Taos County. In the 1870s a demand for New Mexico mutton developed in Kansas and Nebraska. The woolly critters were grazed on the Great Plains and then sent to mid-western packing plants. By 1880 the number of sheep in Taos County grew to 186,000, and by 1884 New Mexico had 5.5 million sheep. New Mexico became “the cradle of the sheep industry.” During this time New Mexico led all western states in sheep production.

The sheep industry then changed with the arrival of the railroad, and families like the Ilfelds, Gusdorfs, Bonds, and McCarthys began buying sheep and wool and gaining interest in the communal lands of the various land grants. The massive number of sheep and the extensive over grazing quickly deteriorated the pastures during the New Mexico Territorial Period. Waist high grasses in some areas were replaced by sagebrush and greasewood.

Then the federal government under the administration of Theodore Roosevelt took over large portions of the old land grants. The lands became “public domain” for conservation purposes, and sheep growers had only limited access to their traditional grazing lands. Some of the former communal grazing lands were also lost for non-payment of taxes.<sup>2</sup>

Some families such as the Rosalio Mondragon and Blas Chavez families continued raising sheep during the 1930s-1960s with herds of about 1500 sheep. By acquiring grazing permits from the forest service and purchasing their own grazing lands they were able to manage large sheep raising operations that became very lucrative.<sup>3</sup> They would trail their sheep to winter and summer pastures. They would deliver, dock, and mark the lambs, and shear their sheep and sell the wool in the spring and the lambs in the fall.<sup>4</sup> The young men in the families would become full-fledged shepherders at about the age of ten. Other families continued to run smaller flocks of 100-300 sheep mainly for their own subsistence.

During the time period of 1920s-1960s many New Mexican men who no longer had sheep traveled to states like Montana, Wyoming, Colorado, and Utah to work in big ranches in those northern states that had acquired their sheep from New Mexico. Many of these “Nortenos” sought employment in an industry that they knew well. They were considered the best shepherders available. These borregueros would leave New Mexico in the spring and not return to their families until the fall when the sheep were sent to market. One account is that once they arrived there for their sheep herding jobs they “received \$20 a month, room and board, a horse, and a dog”.<sup>5</sup> Despite their low wages and long working hours they were able to support their families, but their absence for six months or more took its toll on their families.

In Taos County by the 1960s the sheep industry continued to decline as adequate range was no longer available in the old Spanish and Mexican land grants or on public land. Most families totally abandoned sheep raising or reduced their herds significantly. Members of these families moved out of state or began to pursue other careers or a different line of work. Since the 1970s only a small number of sheep are commonly seen in small flocks in “El Norte.” The era of oveja in the area came to a halt and the once huge number of sheep in the area became the “sheep in our past.”

## Footnotes

- 1 Corina A. Santistevan and Julia Moore, eds. Taos A Topical History, (Santa Fe: Museum of New Mexico Press, 2013), pp. 95-99
- 2 Ibid. pp. 98-101
- 3 The Taos News, Tradiciones, October 2017, “Early Shepherding in Taos”, by Scott Gerdes, p. 12
- 4 Rosalio Mondragon Family Manuscript, “El Fiel Pastor”, by John I Mondragon, pp. 58-79
- 5 Jose Manuel Martinez Y Juana Maria Aragon, “Mis Primos, Los Descendientes De”, by Paul M. Martinez, p. 8



# MEMORIES OF PAST CHRISTMASSES

by Josephine M. Cordova

(Reprinted from Issue 14 - Winter 1992)

In the past, during my parents' early years, people celebrated Christmas in a very different way than we do today.

Christmas time was not a time for buying and spending your last penny. It was a time for worship, people getting ready for the coming of the Messiah, Christ our King. The four weeks of Advent were important for everyone who was brought up in the Catholic faith. With the celebration of Our Lady of Guadalupe on the 12th of December, people began to prepare for the greatest festival of the year, Christmas, or the Nativity.



Pigs were butchered, and friars were prepared for the nine days of Christmas.

My mother did not own a Frigidaire, but she had a little house inside the Arroyo Seco River. It was covered with screen wire with shelves. Here, she always kept her food nice and fresh.

The pig's head was cleaned and boiled. My mother cooked the meat. She ground it, flavored it with minced onions and made head cheese from it. Empanaditas were made from the pork she cooked for three hours. My mother ground the meat and sweetened it. She added piñon nuts and also raisins and spices. She made dough and made meat turnovers or empanaditas. Her apple pies, posole and many other dishes were ready for the Celebration. My mother's brothers and their families came every year to celebrate Christmas with us. During the year, my mother had made many quilts and table cloths, and many other gifts for those who came.

On the 16th of December, we would all go to the mountains to get a Christmas tree.

My mother made popcorn from the corn she raised in the garden. We strung the popcorn and decorated the tree.

Under the tree, my mother placed the animals she had made for the children who came to spend Christmas with us.

When I was four years old, my mother went to Posner's Store to buy gifts for our guests. She bought a winding toy for one of our cousins who lived about one half mile from our house. It was one of the most beautiful toys that I ever saw when I was a child.



On the 16th of December, many schoolboys would wear masks and go visit the houses where luminarias were lit. The masked boys (abuelos) would come to our yard and dance around the luminarias. They made us kneel and pray the Ave Maria. After the abuelos danced, we knelt down to pray to Our Father and recite the Ave Maria once again. My mother invited the masked young men to come into our house for the feast she prepared for them every night during the nine days before Christmas.

We celebrated Christmas at home. In the evening, our guests left. They happily took the gifts we gave them.

Before the holidays were over, my uncle and aunt invited us to go to their house for dinner.



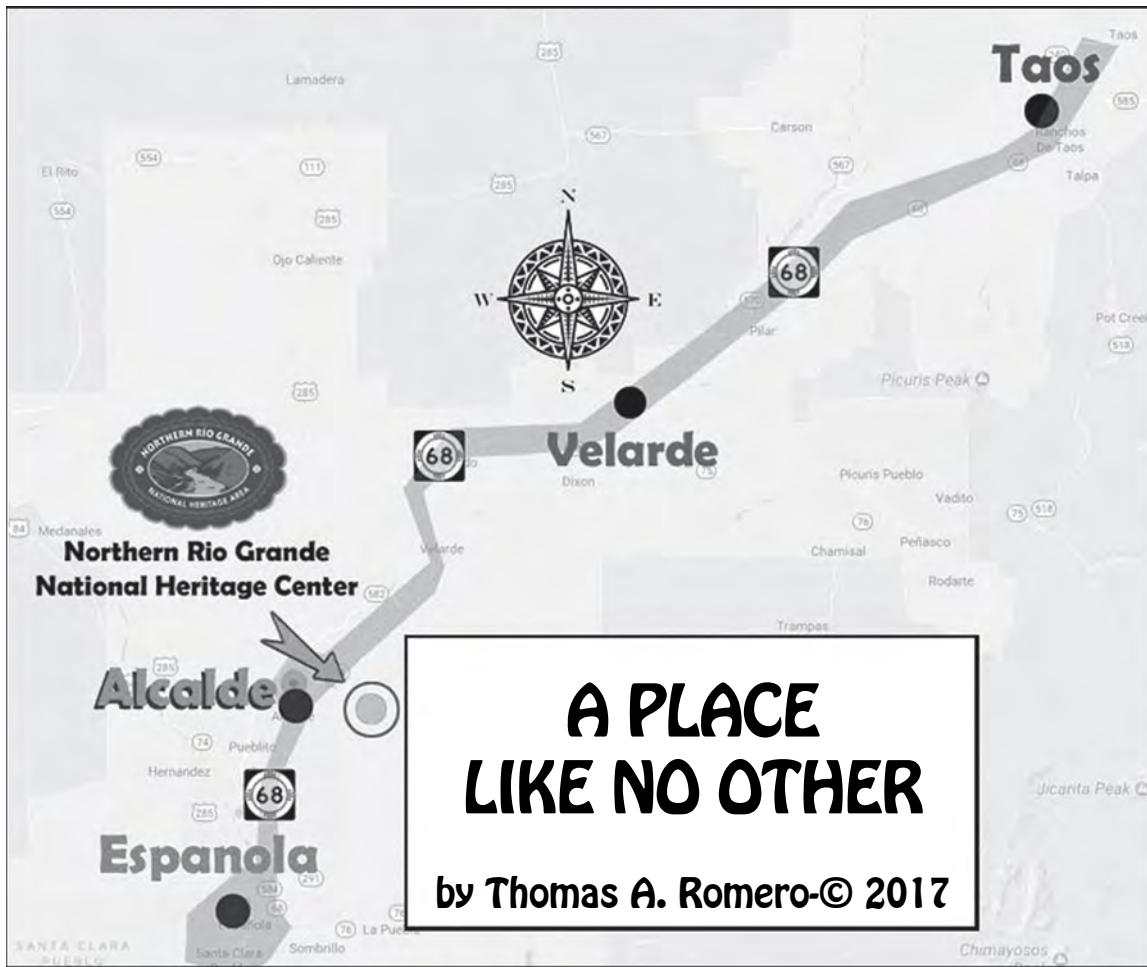
When we went back home, my mother found out that I had stolen the beautiful toy that my mother had given to my cousin. When my father found out what I had done, he took a switch and he made me walk all the way back to my relatives to return the stolen toy. Never again during my lifetime did I take things that did not belong to me. I learned a lesson the hard way.

At dawn on Christmas morning, the kids from the neighborhood would come asking for Christmas gifts. They sang:

Oremos oremos  
Angelitos semos  
Del cielo vinemos  
A pedir oremos  
y si no nos dan  
Puertas y ventanas quebraremos.

*I believe Christmas Day is the most important day of the year.  
It is a commemoration of the coming of Our Lord.*

Josephine Cordova was a retired teacher and school administrator. She was a long-time member of the Historical Society and the Honoree of the Year in 1991.



The greater Southwest—the states of California, Nevada, Utah, Colorado, Texas and Arizona—that surround New Mexico share this state’s developmental history as part of the Spanish empire and Mexican territory. All these lands were ceded to the United States by Mexico as part of the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, but New Mexico came into the United States as a conquered land—taken by military force, along with California—at the start of the Mexican-American War. Yet it is only New Mexico among these states that today is still referenced in other parts of the country as a foreign place.

Interestingly, New Mexico, especially in the northern region surrounding the Rio Grande, contains the heart of Pueblo Indian homelands, some more than a 1000 years old. Other

pueblos date from the arrival of the Spanish more than 400 years ago. It is perhaps the association of centuries of settlement by these different cultures, and the preservation of their languages and customs, that have created the unique mindset and lifeways of the region that set it apart from most of the United States.

**Creation of the National Heritage Area**

On October 12, 2006, Congress recognized the distinct nature of the region by creating the Northern Río Grande National Heritage Area, becoming the nation’s 49th designated heritage area. The Heritage Area’s 10,000 square miles includes the counties of Taos, Rio Arriba and Santa Fe, and contains historic centers of Pueblo and Spanish governance and settlements. It shelters eight pueblos (Taos, Picuris, Ohkay Owingeh, Santa Clara, San Ildefonso, Nambe, Pojoaque and Tesuque), and the Jicarilla Apache Nation. Numerous traditional communities, designated monuments and historic landmarks, and an abundance of cultural and natural resources—including the cultural offerings of Santa Fe, Taos and Española—are found here.

The Rio Grande River flows through the center of the heritage area, but it is also strongly defined by its mountains, mesas and high-desert terrain. It extends from the Colorado border to the center of the state and includes the mighty Sangre de Cristo mountain range, many other smaller ranges and the Continental Divide. Within its boundaries lie a variety of cultural and recreational resources, and its residents and visitors visit cherished places for recreation and to connect with nature, culture and history.

The work done by the Northern Rio Grande National Heritage Area program is known to the communities and organizations that we have helped through our grants programs, or technical assistance we have provided for community development. Others know of the Heritage Area through the film *Land Water People Time*, a documentary produced and funded by our nonprofit organization. The film premiered in 2012 and earned several film festival awards.

The film was created to showcase the complex cultural mosaic of the National Heritage Area. It presents stories culled from interviews with Pueblo, Apache, Hispanic and Anglo residents. The interviewees are descendants of generations whose histories involve tribal, international and civil wars, droughts and intercultural raiding. The film was produced by David Lindblom, Cynthia Jeanette Gomez and Daniel Valerio, with music created and performed by Ronald Roybal and Veronica Ortiz.

The title *Land Water People Time* is being used for the Heritage Area publication that was launched in 2015 to continue to highlight those elements that give the Heritage Area its unique place within the history of the United States. It is part of our efforts to invite visitors and residents to learn about the cultural treasures of Northern New Mexico and its people.

**Preserving Distinct Ways of Life**

A National Heritage Area is a place recognized by Congress for its unique contribution to the American experience. In a National Heritage Area, natural, cultural, historical and recreational resources combine to form a cohesive, nationally distinctive landscape arising from patterns of

human activity shaped by geography. The purpose of the Heritage Area is not just in preserving sites, but a way of life. It is dedicated to developing and sustaining the distinct cultures, values and history of north-central New Mexico.

From ancient Native cultures and Spanish exploration and colonization, to Mexican independence and American statehood, Northern New Mexico's history is complex and intensely interesting. The combination of cultures, languages, folk arts, customs and architecture that emerged from these multifaceted interactions continue to shape the Heritage Area today, giving it a flavor all its own. We add the current experience of Mexican immigrants and Anglo migrations to the mix, and the region becomes a place like no other.

The Northern Rio Grande National Heritage Area will tell the often-turbulent story of these diverse cultures—of their interactions with the landscape and with each other—and of the rich traditions that have created what today is a living mosaic of history and culture. Traditions go to the heart of the Heritage Area. They not only define its past but also continue to provide sustenance, inspiration and cultural identity for residents today.

The Heritage Area is rich in cultural and natural resources: it is home to 16 National Historic Landmarks and 270 listings on the National Register of Historic Places. Its geologic history and wealth of natural resources is no less vivid. Water is the starting point, the lifeblood of this semi-arid to arid land where one river, the Rio Grande, occupies center stage. The Rio Grande and its major tributary, the Rio Chama, are part of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. The Heritage Area also counts nine National Scenic Byways and the new Rio Grande del Norte National Monument. Two national forests cover vast acres in the three-county area, which also is home to a half-dozen Wilderness Areas and two listings on the National Registry of Natural Landmarks. Longstanding Bandelier National Monument skirts the western edge of the Heritage Area, and Pecos National Historical Park the eastern edge.

Cultural resources of the Heritage Area are extensive and varied. They include archeological sites, extensive petroglyph collections, historic Native and Hispanic villages and buildings, plazas, churches and cemeteries, farms and acequias, and cultural events and activities. Taos Pueblo is recognized as a World Heritage Site. Santa Fe's Palace of Governors is the nation's oldest government building, dating to the founding of the City of Santa Fe circa 1610.

## Our Gifts to the World

For all the changes wrought by centuries of human habitation and environmental change, the Northern Rio Grande National Heritage Area retains a recognizable feeling and identity. Older ways of making a living continue to hold meaning and value. Communities dating to the 11th and 12th centuries continue to be inhabited today, while archeological sites document human occupation in the region as far back as 12,000 years.

The history and culture of the Heritage Area is a long and fascinating unfolding of human activities: the development of early agriculture, the complex architecture of the earliest inhabitants, the movement of peoples as a result of environmental and societal pressures, the arrival of new inhabitants, and the relations between all the varied groups moving across and into the landscape. Descendants of the Pueblo peoples retain much of their ancient lands, and continue to speak their respective Native languages and to practice their religions. Similarly, descendants of Spanish explorers (the *conquistadores*) and settlers retain their cultural practices, a strong religious identity, and a dialect of the Spanish language dating to the 16th and 17th centuries.

Music, dance, ceremonies, fairs, and traditional arts and crafts—such as weaving, pottery, basketry and carved and painted religious art—are found not only in local museums, but also at local arts markets that draw visitors from all over world. The historic and cultural continuity of the region is our inheritance and also our gift to the world. What makes the Northern Rio Grande National Heritage Area unique is that so much of its past is still alive and vital. The life ways and relationships of ancestors continue to echo in lives being lived today. The Northern Rio Grande National Heritage Area intends to ensure that this distinctive nexus of cultures and landscapes is preserved and celebrated. The publication, *Land Water People Time*, is an educational journey that expresses our celebration.

Thomas Romero is the Executive Director of the Northern Rio Grande National Heritage Area.

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# 75th Anniversary of the Bataan Death March • 1942-2017

## Visit our website for a survivor's recollection.



## 2018 Lectures, Field Trips & Special Events (Tentative Schedule)

January - No Program  
February 3 - Annual Meeting  
March 3 - Lecture  
April 7 - Lecture  
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May 6 - Honoree Luncheon  
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June 2 - Lecture  
July 7 - Las Vegas, NM Field Trip

August 4 - Lecture  
September 8 - Lecture

October 6 - Lecture  
November 3 - Lecture  
-\*-

December 2 - Holiday Luncheon  
-\*-

Please visit our website for a complete schedule

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

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## Taos County Historical Society Board of Directors

President: Ernestina Cordova

Vice-president: Benton Bond

Secretary/Treasurer: Judy Weinrobe

Member-at-large: Paul Figueroa

### Board Members

Jennifer Felsburg • Dave Cordova

Mark Henderson • David Maes

### Programs

Paul Figueroa

### Membership

Jennifer Felsburg

### Publications/Website

Dave Cordova

### Hospitality

Elaine Montaña

### Preservation

Mark Henderson

### Folklore

David Maes

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 sign up on our website:  
<http://taoscountyhistoricalsociety.org/members.html>  
or 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  
or e-mail: [cordova@taosnet.com](mailto:cordova@taosnet.com)



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