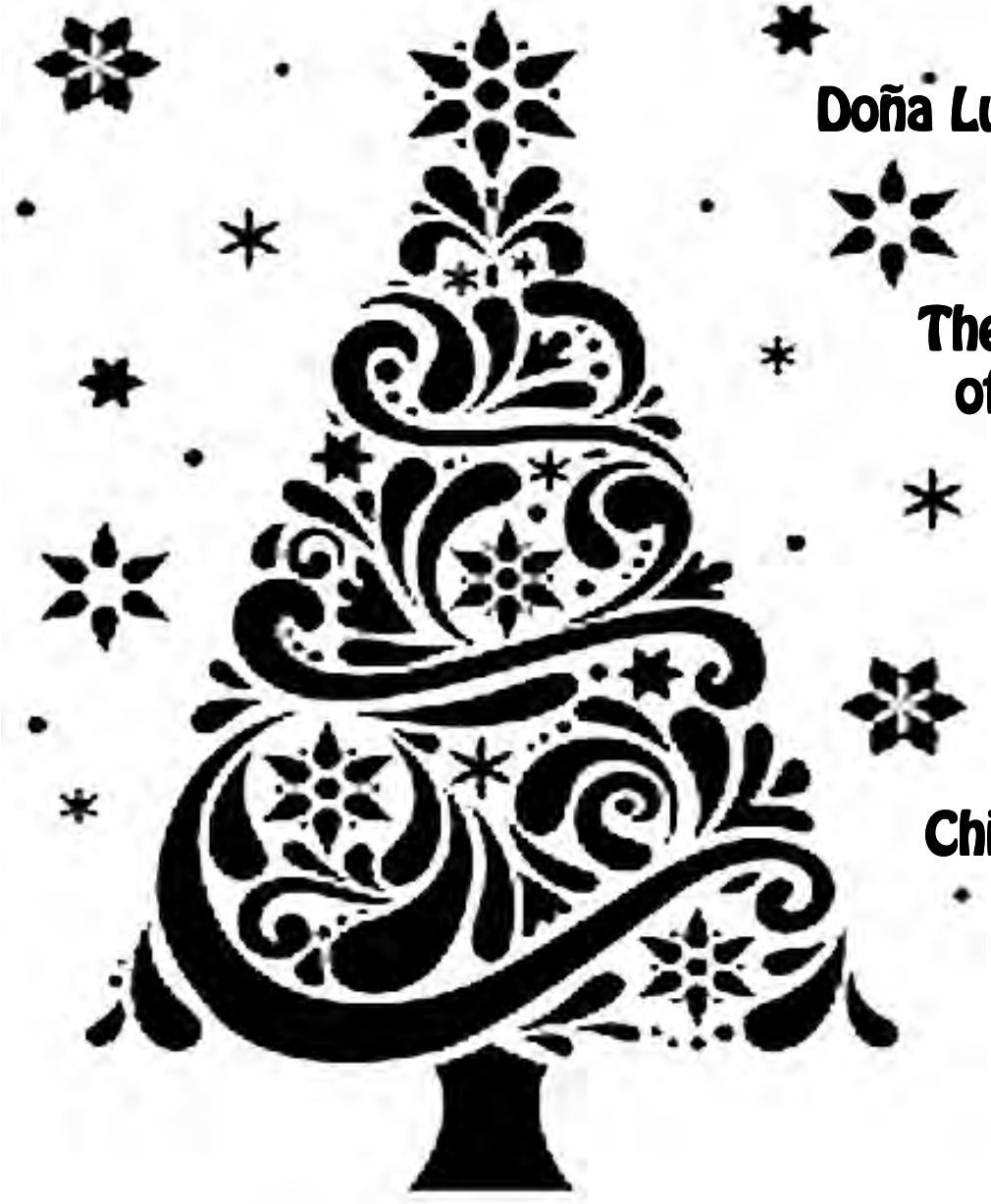
AYER Y HOY en TAOS

Yesterday and Today in Taos County and Northern New Mexico

Fall 2018 Issue #45

Merry Christmas



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Happy Holidays

A publication of the Taos County Historical Society

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Fall 2018 Issue No. 45
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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.

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A Message from the TCHS President Ernestina Cordova

Dear Friends and Members,

We are at the end of another year, we will close by thanking all of our members for the support they have given us. It is wonderful to see attendance of our historical lectures growing as more Taoseños become interested in history.

This coming February, I will complete 10 years in service of the TCHS as president. This community organization was created to bring our members interesting historical accounts of people, places and things. We are proud of our members and express gratitude and admiration for their insight, knowledge and service to our community in preserving our local history.

Our newsletter, *Ayer Y Hoy*, continues to be a source of historical information to the community, creating a record of past and present historical articles, which enrich our Taos History. I want to thank all the contributors and David Cordova, our editor, who takes many hours to put it together twice a year. Our members and non-members alike have enjoyed the many informative lectures, including our featured speaker, Henrietta Martinez Christmas at our wonderful May Luncheon, who spoke on "A History of Taos County through Genealogy." In June we had "19th Century Fur Trader and Merchant Ceran St. Vrain," by Christine Fischahs who is a descendant of Ceran St. Vrain. In July, we had our Field Trip to Las Vegas, NM to tour the Montezuma Castle and have lunch at the historic Plaza Hotel. In August, "Rio Grande River History in Northern New Mexico" was presented by Paul Bauer. September's lecture featured Nora Libman who presented her program, "From Spain to New Mexico - The Journey to Keep a Secret." The October lecture was on "Bailes and Fandangos" by Andres Amijo. Author Robert Julyan, sponsored by the New Mexico Humanities Council, presented a stirring lecture based on his book, "Place Names of New Mexico."

For the Christmas Luncheon, Robert Torrez was our chosen speaker to present "Defending New Mexico's Frontier-The New Mexico Presidio and Militia."

Christmas is the season of giving and love. Let us spread happiness and love to our family, our friends, and to all of our acquaintances who have made this year prosperous for us. Thank you!

Ernestina Cordova, President
Taos County Historical Society

"DOÑA LUZ LUCERO DE MARTINEZ"
by Ruth G. Fish

Pictured: Dorris Boyer, Ruth Fish, Pete Concha & Corina Santistevan.

Born at La Placita de Los Luceros in 1800, the baby girl who would one day be Doña Luz Lucero de Martinez had two distinguished grandfathers. One was a founder of the village bearing his name, and the other was a general in the army of the Spanish king, Carlos III.

Cristóbal Maria Larrañaga, the young general, had heard of the beauty and fertility of the Taos Valley in the northern part of the great province of New Mexico. With his brother, Ramon, he longed to try his lot with the settlers who were going to take possession of the land.

During the reign of King Carlos, there had been no wars. Spain had enjoyed a great revival of trade and commerce, and the acquisition of New Mexico had added a vast territory to the holdings of the crown. However, at the time when De Vargas subdued the hostile pueblos and went to El Paso to seek more colonists, there were only about 1500 Spanish in a whole area which included what is now Arizona.

Following the final conquest of the resentful pueblo tribes in 1696, the Spanish kings had done everything possible to encourage the settlement of the country. Grants of land were given to nobles of the court who came with their retinues to live on the property and cultivate it.

By 1760, there were about 8,000 who had taken advantage of the opportunities offered. Their letters telling of the richness of the farm and grazing lands attracted so many of their kinsmen, friends, and adventurers who longed for a change of scene that by the end of the 18th century, there were approximately 24,000 Spaniards in the colony.

Cristóbal Maria, his wife, and two children, Miguel and Pablita, with Ramon and his family, embarked for the new world circa 1780, and met with stormy seas and a difficult crossing. In mid-Atlantic, Cristobal Maria's wife died and was buried at sea.

Bereaved and discouraged, yet undaunted, he brought his children on to Taos after a long and hazardous journey from the southern city where their vessel put into port. His brother, Ramon, however, hesitated to bring his loved ones beyond Santa Fe where he believed it was safer. There were more people and less danger from the bands of Apaches and Comanches who harrassed the little groups living away from the well-populated strongholds. At this point the brothers separated.

Cristóbal Maria's unbounded energy found a satisfactory outlet in the challenge of establishing a home for his children. He became a leader in the new community, interested in the education and culture of the young people and always willing to lend a hand to assist a neighbor or friend. Within a few years both of his children were married.

Pablita's husband was Pablo Lucero, son of one of the founders of their village, La Placita de Los Luceros, one of the most attractive places in the Valley. The soil was good, and the Rio Pueblo and Rio Lucero furnished ample water for bounteous crops. The estates were the well kept and adequate homes of landed gentry.

Their daughter, Luz, born in 1800, was very beautiful from infancy and was the pride of the family as she grew. Believing that daughters as well as sons should be educated, her father hired a tutor to teach her reading, writing, history, arithmetic, and geography. Her mother taught her to sew, embroider, and weave. Like most girls of the period she learned early to ride very well.

Books and household ornaments that had made the perilous journey from Spain had been inherited by Pablita from her mother's estate, and of these Luz was very proud. She was especially interested in poetry and music, and she had learned to sing while still a small girl.

She was intensely religious and liked best of the church's seasonal observations the celebration of the Christmas novenas.

Luz delighted in personal adornment, and, since her father was wealthy, she was always well-dressed. But in addition to a certain elegance, she had a good disposition and much personal charm which brought her an admiring circle of friends among the young people of the vicinity.

One of these was her future husband whom she married young. He was Santiago Martinez, son of Antonio Severino Martinez, and he was a younger brother of Padre Antonio Jose Martinez, the intellectual leader of the community.

Her *prendario* (betrothal feast) was a most impressive event. The relatives and friends of both young people were bidden to the home of the bride-to-be. The parents of the groom accompanied him to bring the jewels and trousseau, their gifts to the bride. Then there was a great feast and dancing to celebrate the betrothal.

Within a few days, Luz and Santiago were married in the Lucero home, since in that era it was permissible for the ceremony to be performed in the home if the social position of the families warranted such consideration. The young couple were met by their attendants who carried gifts of cakes which were later eaten at the wedding feast, according to an old Spanish custom. They were then led to an altar which had been constructed in the main sala where they made their marriage vows.

In the ceremony the bride and groom each carried a lighted candle given them by the priest. He then placed a strip of vestment around their shoulders in token of the tie that bound them and of the shield of divine protection given them by the church.

On the following morning Luz and Santiago, their attendants, relatives, and guests went to the church for the nuptial mass. When they returned to the Lucero residence, the wedding feast awaited them on tables covered with richly embroidered cloths of fine linen, laden with food.

Musicians tuned their instruments for the dancing which lasted throughout the day and until the sun came up the next morning. As many of the guests had come from long distances, they stayed for several days, visiting, dancing, and regaling themselves with food. which continued to come from the kitchen in endless quantities.

When the dower chest was packed, and Luz went with her husband to the home of his parents where a new house had been built and furnished for their use.

Luz was very fond of velvets and had many lovely gowns of the costly fabric in her wardrobe. For other dresses of silk and satin, she had gay corpiños de seda, bodices of green and gold, embroidered, braided and adorned with countless tiny buttons. For summer wear she had blouses of silk and handkerchief linen, much like modern fiesta blouses, which were worn with long, full skirts of silk.

Her jewelry included the brooches, necklaces, and earrings that her grandmother had worn in Spain as well as the trinkets her father had given her. Then there were the wedding gifts, delicately wrought gold and silver pins, hair ornaments, tiaras, and necklaces made in Mexico.

She began to lead the life of a young matron in the enlightened social circles of the community. Acknowledgment of her beauty was widespread, and people said, "No hay mujer tan linda como Doña Luz." Her husband, who was devoted to her, referred to her then and throughout his lifetime as "La reina de mi casa." She continued her interest in books and music, exchanging her few precious books and pamphlets with friends and singing for the entertainment of her guests in her new home.

Doña Luz chose for the special religious festival to be observed there her favorite from her early years, the Christmas novenas. Every year the entire neighborhood gathered in her *salas* to say the novena prayer after lighting the *luminarias* (bonfires of pitchy pine faggots sometimes called "shepherd's fires") outside her door. Nine were burned the ninth day before Christmas, eight on the eighth day, and so on down to Christmas Eve. Then only one was lighted before Luz and Santiago and their neighbors marched to the church to celebrate the midnight mass.

After the prayers were said on each night of the novenas, food was served, empanaditas, marquesote, queso, and other good holiday fare. Then an hour of conversation or music was enjoyed before the group dispersed.

Don Santiago and Doña Luz had eight children, Inocencio, Nestor, Pablo, Miguel, Teofilo, David, Jesusita, and Eleonor. All were given a good education and without exception, they were interested in literature, music or art. Some found self-expression in these areas, and those who did not nevertheless had great appreciation.

In the face of changing conditions through the middle years of the 19th Century, they contributed to the establishment and preservation of the culture of the Valley.

Teofilo, Pablo, and Inocencio enlisted in the Union army during the Civil War, and they fought in the Battle of Valverde. Inocencio was the secretary of his battalion. Doña Luz spent many anxious days then, but the tradition handed down from her grandfather, General Larrañaga, made it imperative that the men of her family should serve their country in time of need. She told them goodbye with a brave heart and spent most of her days in prayer until they returned.

Miguel and Inocencio were the intellectuals. Miguel wrote poetry as well as recording historical data of the spectacular events that occurred in and around Taos. Taos was at that time an important trading center where the wares of the United States and Mexico, the blankets, potteries and leather goods made by the Indians, the pelts brought by trappers, were sold and exchanged. Bishop Lamy once said that most of the mischief as well as the constructive things that happened in New Mexico had their inception in Taos, and there were many events of importance for Miguel to record.

Inocencio was a born scholar, and his mother determined to give him the best type of education then available in New Mexico. He was sent to the school of his uncle, Padre Martinez, in Taos and there specialized in languages. He mastered English, Latin, and Spanish and remained thoroughly conversant with all three, in spoken or written form, during his entire lifetime.

He was county secretary for many years, and most of the early records of deeds, marriages, and legal transactions of the county are in his handwriting. He taught in a private school at Black Lake and also at one in Conejos, Colorado. He was pleased to have his daughter, Cornelia, follow in his footsteps as a teacher at Costilla, (In 1874, Cornelia married Juan Andres Bernal, of Costilla, who became the first public school teacher in Taos the same year.)

Inocencio also shared Doña Luz' musical talent, and when he was a small boy made a violin from the boards of a box which came into his possesion. His father, observing that Inocencio spent most of his time with the instrument, destroyed it.

However, Padre Martinez had been, with keen interest, watching the boy's efforts to learn music, and upon learning of the incident of the broken violin, reproved Don Santiago severely and bought a violin for Inocencio.

he kind Padre's encouragement made it possible for Inocencio to study both violin and harp, and in his later years to become the most famous musician in the Valley. Students came from many places, some as far as Albuquerque, for instruction.

He was also a composer of many works based on the sounds of the winds, the waters and the songs of the birds which he used both in instruction and in concerts, for he was in great demand for social gatherings, playing before audiences in every section of northern New Mexico and in Santa Fe and Albuquerque. The harp, for which he composed, he had also made by hand.

Doña Luz was always his most devoted admirer. With deep satisfaction she saw him fulfill his dreams and carry his songs to the world. She had cherished dreams and songs but could make no career of them, because she was a woman whose station in life precluded her participation in such public activities in that period.

The exact date of the Doña' s death is unknown, but she survived Don Santiago for many years and lived to an advanced age. She is buried in Taos on the Pueblo Road in the old cemetery which adjoins Sierra Vista.

ADDENDUM:

Descendants of Doña Luz who were living at the time of the original research (1940)

Great-grandchildren:

BERNAL, Jacobo M., Inocencio, Ruben
LEDOUX, Adelina, Amadea; David, Dick, Emilio, Josephine, Pablo
LUNA, Antonio, Flavio, Rafael, Tirnoteo
MARTINEZ, Alice, Inocencio, Margarita, Raquel, Samuel
QUINTANA, Servilia
RIVERA, Gilbert, Mario, and Mrs. T.A.
SISNEROS, Eloisa

Grandchildren, some of whom were the parents of the above.

Rosario LeDoux, Manuelita Luna, Carolina Martinez y Martinez, Celeria Martinez de Rivera, Cornelia Martinez de Bernal, Fidelia Martinez de Trujillo, Guillermo and Pedro Martinez, and Refugio Martinez de Santistevan also Isaac and Patricio Romero

"THE CHRISTMAS PAGEANTS OF HOLY TRINITY PARISH"

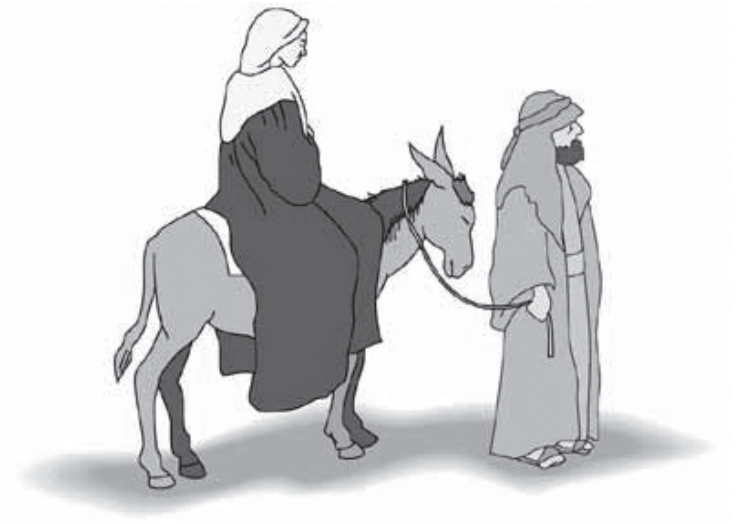
by Dr. Larry Torres

Christmas in New Mexico has always been a time of age-old traditions reaching back into European history. In the major cities of New Mexico, the familiar bell-ringing Santa Clauses on street intersections appear the day after Thanksgiving. In remote mountain hamlets, however, less familiar but just as traditional characters appear.

On cold nights, beginning December 11, ancient ancestral figures called *Abuelos* wake up from their yearlong sleep. They pull the cobwebs out of their beards and slowly wend their way down from the mountains, cracking their whips and loudly asking if the people of the valleys still remember the ancient ways.

"Do you still know your prayers?"
"Do you still know how to dance a *cuna*?"
"Do you still know how to sing a *decima*?"

Upon sighting the Abuelos, unsuspecting villagers might at first be scared by their outdated clothing and strange, long beards. Upon closer scrutiny, however, one recognizes in them the Spanish counterparts of bell-ringing city Santa Clauses. Yes, the Abuelos have returned to check on New Mexicans' knowledge of their past. Have they forgotten the lessons that the first settlers brought to this land? Do they still have the medieval morality plays?



In the northern hamlets of Taos County, the answer is still a resounding YES! Often known morality plays whose performances have been recorded in the Southwest throughout the centuries, five are still alive and well at Holy Trinity Parish.

Villagers from the communities of Arroyo Seco, Arroyo Hondo, Las Colonias, Valdez and Desmontes select roles during the Christmas season and act out ancient metered verses that tell of the Holy Season. They perform not only in their villages, but also in Costilla, Mora, Las Vegas and Peñasco as well.

The first of the morality plays is "*Las Cuatro Apariciones de la Virgen de Guadalupe*" (The Four Appearances of the Virgin of Guadalupe). It reaches back to Mexico City in 1531. An Indian lad, Juan Diego, sees a radiant Virgin atop a ruined Aztec temple. She bids him deliver a message to the great Archbishop of Zumarraga. She would have him build a temple in her honor. The Archbishop is at first skeptical, but the Lady sends him a mighty sign: some roses that have miraculously bloomed in the dead of winter are placed in the Indian's *tilma* (shawl). As he carries them back to the Archbishop, the colors of the roses are absorbed into the cloth and the image of the Lady of Guadalupe is miraculously imprinted upon it. This miracle sets the scene for the mass-scale conversion of the Mexican Indians to Christianity and "*Las Cuatro Apariciones de la Virgen de Guadalupe*" is now performed every December 12 as the official launching of the Christmas season.

The second of the *auto sacramentales* (acts of faith) is the comic drama "*Los Pastores*," the Second Shepherd's Play. In this piece, shepherds out tending their flocks at night see a mighty sign in the heavens announcing the birth of the Messiah. Unfortunately, they're not the only ones to see the sign. The Prince of Darkness, Lucifer, has also seen it and schemes to confound the shepherds so that they will not go off to worship the babe in the manger. However, as in all morality plays, Good finally triumphs. The Angel Michael defeats Lucifer in a sword fight and chains him up for a thousand years.

The characters in the play personify various village folk; the industrious leader, the beautiful maidservant, the corrupt monk, the lazy man. The audience is quick to identify with them, which makes *Los Pastores* a favorite piece from the Christmas drama cycle. It is usually performed on December 24 at midnight, before *La Misa de! Gallo* (Midnight Mass).

The first day of the New Year is launched with a Latin high mass, followed by a winter procession. The old *bulto* saints of the five valley communities are paraded outdoors. A rustic altar is set up for them in the church yard, and *Los Matachines* dance is performed in their honor.

Los Matachines of Arroyo Seco are unique-it is the only troupe that features female as well as male dancers. By definition and tradition, *las matachines* has always been performed by male dancers. But here the troupe is comprised of six male and six female dancers.

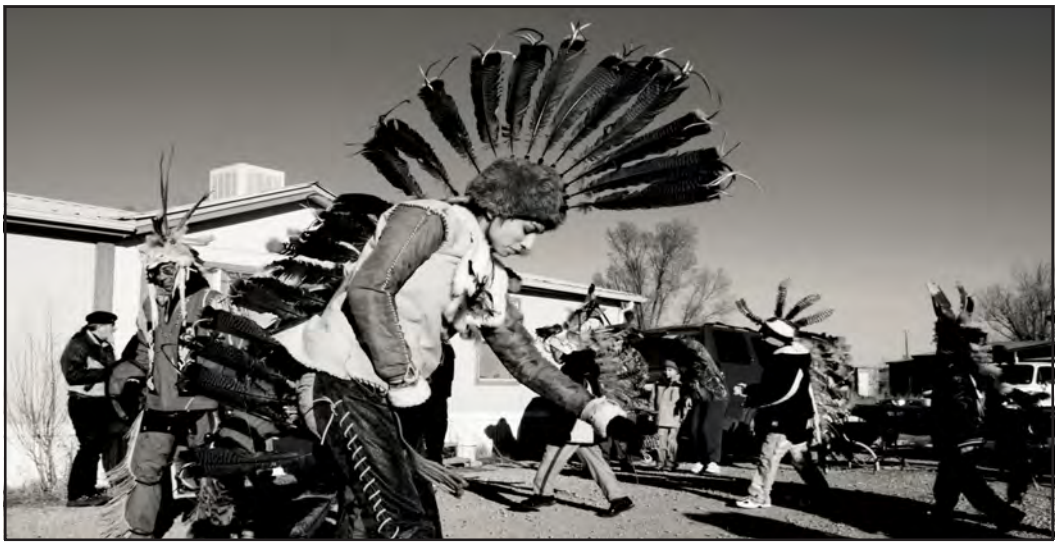
Los Matachines is based on an old play penned in Spain in 1501 called *La batalla de Los moros y los cristianos.* A Moorish prince named Selin captures some Christians and tortures them in an effort to shake their faith. The Christians, however, hold fast and the Moors are so impressed they convert to Christianity. *Los Matachines* was first performed in 1533 in Mexico. It was hoped that the Meshica Indians (Aztecs) would take a lesson from the Moors and also convert to Christianity. The message failed, since the Indians did not yet understand Spanish. They did like the costumes, however, and for centuries the dance was kept alive, though its significance was lost.

Before its revival in 1985, the dance of *Los Matachines* was last performed in Arroyo Seco in 1938. Some of the original dancers were still able to perform it fifty years later!

In Europe, Christmas is still celebrated on January 6, the Day of the Three Kings. And so it still is in the valley of Arroyo Hondo. The morality play "*Los Tres Reyes Magos*" (The Three Wise Men) was penned by the late Reyes N. Martinez of that valley. He memorized it from his father, who memorized it from his father...

In the play, the Magi scan the skies and spot a star that foretells the birth of the King of Kings. They follow the star to the kingdom of the evil tyrant Herod, who is disturbed by the news. Tempted by Lucifer, he plots to kill the Messiah by ordering the death of countless innocent children. An angel warns the Magi, however. When they find the baby they do him homage. The massacred children are miraculously resurrected by a look from the Holy Child and the play ends on an up note.

This, of course, sets the mood for the last play in the Christmas cycle called *El Nino Perdido.* Wishing to escape the wiles of Herod, Joseph and Mary take the infant to far-off Egypt. The years pass. The child is eleven years old when the play begins and Joseph and Mary return to Jerusalem. There, the Holy Child, who can see into the future, foresees the painful death He must endure at the age of thirty-three. Distracted, He wanders away from His parents and makes His way to the temple of Jerusalem, where He questions the Doctors of the Church.



His frantic mother, now with hair streaked in white, bemoans the loss of her son. The woeful lament of this play makes this one of the most moving of the Spanish folk operas. The Virgin Mary takes on the aspect of *La Llorona*, thus linking her in the New World to *La Malinche*, mother of the Mestizo race. When at last the family is reunited, the Holy Child blesses the world.

These dramas are unique because ordinary farmers, housewives and school children from the various communities put them on. They're not trained actors, but their performances are very real. Their theater is not an art form; it is a way of life. Collectively, these scores of people call themselves *La Compania de la Santisima Trinidad* (The Holy Trinity Company), in honor of the parish that comprises their five communities.

A new play is added to their repertoire every year, so that by the turn of the century all ten morality plays will be back and the traditions fully restored. The new addition planned for next year is *El Coloquio de San Jose* (The Betrothal of Joseph), featuring the betrothal of Joseph to Mary and the mysterious manner in which St. Joachim is given a sign from the heavens. The only four that remain to be added in sequences are *Adan y Eva*, *Cain y Abel*, *Los Comanches* and *Los Tejanos.*

As the Holy Season draws to a close, *Los Abuelos* perform a ritual bonfire dance in front of the village church. They then return to their mountain sleep, secure in the knowledge that they are not forgotten. The villagers watch them disappear into the smoky night air, sigh in relief and return to their fields and households. They have appeased the Christmas Ogres for another year.

Courtesy of Larry Torres to Taos Historical Society, 1991
Larry Torres is a gifted language teacher, an artist and actor, and a leader in the Arroyo Seco parish.

"CRACK OF THUNDER, FIRST DROPS OF RAIN"

by Jim Levy

The following piece is excerpted from a chapter of Jim Levy's memoir "Rowdy's Boy." It first appeared in Leyendas in the Taos News, September 21, 2017

To get from Los Angeles to Taos, my mother took Route 66, driven in the blazing heat of five summers, 1948-52, east in June and back again in August, the first time in a green Hudson when our mother was forty, Bunny was nine, I was seven and infant Mary. A canvas bag bulging with water hung from the front fender of the sedan to use when the radiator overheated on hills.

Mom rents an adobe in Talpa overlooking the Ranchos valley. She rolls a sprig of sage brush between her fingers and makes me smell it. I play with a gang of Hispanic boys who are smaller and tougher than me and have no trouble throwing me to the ground.

Tio Vivo is a small merry-go-round in the plaza during Fiestas. I join other children riding little animals that go round and round: a lion, a giraffe, a hare with long ears. The animals don't mind going in circles because that's their job and I don't mind going in circles because I keep passing Mom who waves and has a big smile on her face.

The next two summers she rented a house in La Loma, three blocks west of Taos Plaza. The town was small, ending to the south at Jack Denver's motel, to the north at the turn off to Taos Pueblo. There was one stop sign and no traffic lights. At night the town was dark, with just a few splashes of light from the softball game. There were no parking meters but there were burros and horse-drawn wagons in the streets. The phone book was thin, almost a brochure, and the phone numbers consisted of three digits. Our mother laughed when she picked up the phone and a neighbor was already on the line.

The fourth and fifth summers, this would be 1951 and '52, she rented a house from Mabel Dodge Luhan called the Tony House, which Mabel had had built for her Pueblo husband Tony Lujan. The house was on Pueblo land and was a controversial subject. Some people said Tony had been banned from the tribe for marrying Mabel and allowing her to build on Pueblo land. Lawrence and Frieda had lived in it when they first came to Taos and again on a later visit.

Mabel Dodge lived in "the big house" that had many pigeons. We were forbidden to go anywhere near it but I waded up the acequia to her cornfield. Mabel was everything people have said about her: bossy, imperial, rich. A burly woman with short hair and a large nose, she seemed to have a compulsion to slip a little bullying into every encounter. She wrote my mother, after our first summer there: "If Jimmy rides his horse through my cornfield one more time, I'm going to evict you."

Tony Lujan came over most mornings to have coffee with my mother. A bulky Taos Indian with braids, he sat before a cup and didn't seem to drink and then, when it was empty, left. I don't think they talked. I imagine she enjoyed the attention but wasn't taken in. She was a skeptical woman who no longer believed in love or passion. She made pithy remarks about people and said about Tony and his Nash Rambler, "He thinks the center line is to guide him down the middle of the road." Frieda Lawrence visited too, a short plump woman (but soft, not hard like Mabel) whose wide mouth radiated warmth and humor. It is impossible to imagine Lawrence with her and impossible to imagine him without her. Lady Dorothy Brett came over too, a thin woman with big teeth whom people called Brett. She bothered me when she sat straining to hear in our dining room under the portrait she had painted of Toscanini who had an elongated finger pointing downward. I thought it spooky and used to make fun of it – all of us made fun of it, including Mom – but she told us to shut up about it when Brett was there.

Mom was friends with Eulalia Emetaz, an elegant woman with short hair, the owner of La Galeria Escondida, the first gallery in Taos to carry modern art, and with the painter Gisella Loeffler, who bought the house next door, called the Pink House. She was pretty and loaded down with necklaces, bracelets and belts. Lawrence, Frieda and others are said to have painted the doors and walls of that house.

While living at the Tony House, we rented three horses from Taos Pueblo. These were not the docile stable horses we were used to at the riding club in Los Angeles. They were small Indian ponies with mean streaks. One hated to have anything touch her ears so if we tried to slip a bridle over her head, she reared up and went berserk. We had to disassemble a bridle and reassemble it on her. The second glided over to barbed wire fences when she thought we weren't paying attention and rubbed our legs up against them. The third swerved under low branches and tried to knock us off.

My friends and I took them in stride, giving as bad as they gave. Jimmy McCarthy, Johnny Ramming, one of the Randall boys, Billy Parr and two other Hispanic boys whose names I don't remember. One of our deplorable sports was to climb onto the biggest of the horses, four or five of us, and then stick her with a nail. She bucked us off, and the winner was the last boy still on.

We rode into the hills bareback, with only a bridle to control the horses, up one of the long arroyos leading towards the top of the hills, and then, we turned the horses around, slipped the bridles off and gave them a kick. Free, they ran for home with us clinging to the manes as they swerved through trees and around chamisa and sage until they came to jarring halts at the corrals. The winner: again the boy who stayed on.

Taos Plaza then was mostly real stores, not tourist traps. Safeway was on the southwest corner. There was a barbershop, a bar, a restaurant, and the La Fonda hotel. Some nights we went to the Plaza Theater, on the south side of the plaza. We entered off the street directly into the lobby, a cramped dim space bathed in the smells of popcorn and musty carpet, then we pushed through heavy blue velvet curtains into a cavern with over 400 seats.

On the walk home from the Plaza, I often cut through Kit Carson Park, which was just a tangle of brush and trees, dodging the drunks who lay in the bushes calling out to whoever passed. The park included a cemetery where Kit Carson's grave was enclosed by an iron fence. My friends bet me three dollars to sleep on the grave and so I took a sleeping bag and did just that, spent the night sleeping peacefully on top of Carson's grave.

Growing up in west Los Angeles, in a wooded canyon, I didn't have much sense of the sky, but in Taos, I was alert to the drama of the sun, moon and stars as they crossed the immense sky. I was thrilled by the clear mornings when I roamed freely and the afternoon thunderstorms and downpours that seemed to come out of nowhere.

August 11, 1952, was the last day I spent in Taos as a child. I went out into the mesa between our house and the hills. Taos Mountain rose in the north; a string of extinct volcanos sat on the horizon to the west. It was warm and bright when I left the house but early in the afternoon, the sky darkened, thunder rumbled, crack of thunder, and the first drops of rain released the smells of sage brush and dust. A sleepy sexual energy coursed through me as I stood in the rain inhaling the molecules of wet earth.

Then it was over; light returned, the dry air sucked up the moisture.

Without my knowing it, Taos permanently changed me, aroused my senses. entered into my being, and gave me a home to return to.

Jim Levy returned in 1963 and worked as a bartender for Harold Street at the Taos Inn. In the 1970s he was the editor of The Fountain of Light and he helped Harvey Mudd renovate the Plaza Theater and worked there first as manager, then as projectionist. He was executive director of the Harwood Foundation and the Taos Art Association and worked for thirty-five years as an administrator for nonprofit organizations. He is the author of Corazón (and Merkle) about two dogs: Cooler Than October Sunlight, selected poems; Joy To Come, literary essays; The Poems of Caius Herennius Felix, the story of a Roman-Spanish poet; The Fifth Season, a memoir of growing old; Rowdy's Boy, a memoir; Mar Egeo, a travel book; and Monet's Eyes, new and selected poems.

"CHRISTMAS, LOS PASTORES & HISTORY"

by Dr. Thomas Chavez

Long before the modern Christmas of electric lights, Santa Claus of North Pole and the now popular Christmas carols, the day commemorating the birth of Christ in the Hispanic world was a holy day of obligation. People read or heard all the Nativity stories from the Bible. They imagined what it must have been like for Joseph and Mary to give birth to their child in a Bethlehem manger. They knew the story of an angel appearing to a shepherd and of a bright star leading him and his friends to the scene of the Nativity. This story was known to all Europeans as affectionate and easily remembered.

Then, the Hispanic world expanded to the Americans and millions of souls that they believed needed conversation to Catholicism. A new religion had to be taught to these people, and the only way to do this was to give lessons using illustrations and demonstrations.

How these efforts evolved to dramatic musicals playing out Bible scenes is easily pieced together from documentary tidbids and the results that have survived today . Imagine those early missionaries when they first tried to communicate to people who did not understand the language. With translators in tow, the friar had to use gestures, sounds, mimicry, and act. He put on a show. As people began to learn each others' language in varying degrees, all sides came to realize that Bible lessons lent themselves to drama and music. Music, they knew, always served as an excellent tool for teaching language or anything else.

In addition, the church has a long tradition of music and drama. At base, a high Mass sung in Latin, was a musical drama. Organs and choruses performed some of the best music written then or now. The Mass itself reenacted parts of Christ's life like the Last Supper or Pontius Pilot washing his hands. Early missionaries quickly made the musical transition to catechism.

As Spanish settlement expanded to New Mexico at the end of the sixteenth century, so too did the tradition of music and acting. Even one of Juan de Onate's captains wrote a drama that was performed during Easter for the first expedition. There is evidence of instruments and music coming with the first colonist and every generation after. Each of the succeeding generations was culturally a little bit different because society was changing in Mexico. The influences of the great Indian population had an influence on European culture and vice versa. Something new was happening—these people were no longer European; they were American.

One of that fusion of cultures came a series of musical plays that were locally produced and performed. Most of these plays had something to do with the Christmas theme. Los Tres Reyes Magos, Las Posadas and Los Pastores are the most prominent. Matachines did not originate as a Christmas musical or dance, but has become associated with the season.

Los Pastores was most assuredly developed in Mexico during the colonial period. Generally, this drama tells the story of the Angel telling a shepherd that the Christ Child has been born. The shepherd then goes to his camp to tell his buddies about the revelation. A debate ensues during which others reveal that they heard celestial music or had a dream confirming the story. Many versions of the play include a hermit who has befriended the shepherds and is looking for the newborn child. Of course, the shepherds travel to Bethlehem where they present gifts and adore the newborn babe.

The story is infused and livened with a devil who tries to find out what the shepherds know about this new Messiah. Possibly a play of the killing of the innocents, Herod ordered all young children killed in order to prevent the new "King" from fulfilling his prophecy . The devil wants to foil the new birth. The desired information and is defeated in a struggle with the angel Michael.

In addition, the main characters themselves take on traits and personalities. One shepherd is obviously lazy. In one version of the play, the lazy shepherd will not even get up to cat. Others have varying degrees of doubt and/or faith Researchers have spent years traveling throughout the Southwest and Mexico searching for written manuscripts of Los Pastores. Some manuscripts have been uncovered—none from the early colonial period. The discoveries gave rise to comparisons of the different copies. Scholars continue to investigate which copy came from where and what.

Some manuscript copies are available in local archives and libraries. They have been copied and some have been published, even translated. So, for the person who does not understand Spanish and wants to learn more, the opportunity is there. After all, learning was the very basis of the origins of Los Pastores.

Today, Los Pastores is done in New Mexico more than anywhere else in the United States. In addition, there has been a resurgence in New Mexico as well as elsewhere. Every New Mexican knows that plays like Los Pastores is as much a part of Christmas as Santa Claus. Moreover, such prominent evidence of yesteryear's influences is illustrative of the persistence of culture and tradition that makes up today's whole. So enjoy Los Pastores, for you may find pleasure on many levels.

Dr. Thomas Chavez is the director of The Palace of the Governors in Santa Fe, a division of the Museum of New Mexico and the Office of Cultural Affairs.

Bubbe G's Potato Latkes
Contributed by Jennifer Felsburg

Servings: 24 servings
Prep Time: 30 minutes

Ingredients:

- 2 1/2 lbs Yukon Gold potatoes
- 1 large white or brown onion, shredded
- 3/4 cup matzo meal or bread crumbs
- 2 large eggs, beaten
- 1 tbsp potato starch
- 1 1/4 tsp salt, or more to taste
- 1/2 tsp pepper
- Peanut oil for frying (about 1 1/2 cups)
- 1/4 cup schmaltz (optional)

You will also need: hand grater, clean tea towel or layers of cheesecloth, skillet for frying, colander, large mixing bowl, medium bowl, metal spatula, wire cooling rack

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Place your wire cooling rack close to the area where you will be frying the latkes. Place a layer of paper towels below the cooling rack to catch excess oil.
2. Cut the potatoes into large chunks and shred using a hand grater.
3. Place grated potato into a bowl and immediately cover with cold water.
4. Meanwhile, grate the onion using the grater.
5. Drain the potato shreds in a colander. Rinse and dry the bowl used to soak the shreds and set aside.
6. Place drained potato shreds and grated onion in the center of a clean tea towel or multiple layers of cheesecloth.
7. Wrap the shreds up in the cloth, twisting the cloth to secure the bundle, and squeeze firmly to remove excess liquid from the shreds.
8. Pour potato and onion into the clean dry bowl. Stir the shreds with a fork to make sure the grated onion is evenly mixed throughout the potato shreds.
9. In a skillet, add oil to reach a depth of 1/8 inch. Add 1/4 cup of schmaltz to the oil if you'd like, it will add more savory flavor to the latkes. Heat slowly over medium to about 365 degrees F. While oil is heating, use the fork to stir the matzo meal, beaten eggs, potato starch, salt and pepper into the potato and onion shreds. You can add salt and pepper to taste. I add about 1 1/4 tsp salt and 1/2 tsp pepper. You can sprinkle on more salt to taste after cooking, if desired. Take care to make sure the egg and seasonings are fully mixed throughout the potato shreds.
10. Scoop up 3 tbsp of the potato mixture and shape into a tightly compacted disk. I do this by first filling a 1/8 measuring cup and then filling again halfway.
11. Place the disk carefully into the hot oil. Latkes can break apart at this point, they're very delicate. If you can get them into the hot oil in one piece, chances are they will stick together – frying them is like the "glue" that holds them together. It takes a gentle touch, and it may take you some practice to get the "feel" for it.
12. The oil should sizzle, but not pop when the latke hits it; if the oil jumps wildly or smokes, it is too hot. If it only bubbles weakly, the oil is not hot enough. Use the first latke to test the oil temperature, and don't fry a whole batch until the temperature is right.
13. Continue shaping the latkes in this way, using 3 tablespoons of potato mixture for each latke. Fry in batches of 4-5 latkes at a time (no more than that – don't crowd the pan) for 2-3 minutes per side until brown and crispy. Note: If your latkes aren't holding together, stir more potato starch into the mixture, 2 teaspoons at a time, until the batter "holds". You can also add another egg to the mixture and more matzo meal, if needed.
14. Remove the latkes from the pan using a metal spatula and place them on the wire cooling rack to drain.
15. Serving latkes fresh within 10 minutes of frying them, if your cooking schedule permits. If you need to make them ahead, fry them 4 hours or less before serving. After allowing the latkes to drain on the wire cooling rack, place them on an ungreased, unlined cookie sheet. Leave them at room temperature until ready to reheat. Place in a 375 degree oven for about 10 minutes (7 if using a convection oven), until heated through, just prior to serving. Sprinkle with more salt, if desired, and serve latkes with applesauce and/or sour cream.

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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.

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