

AYER Y HOY en TAOS

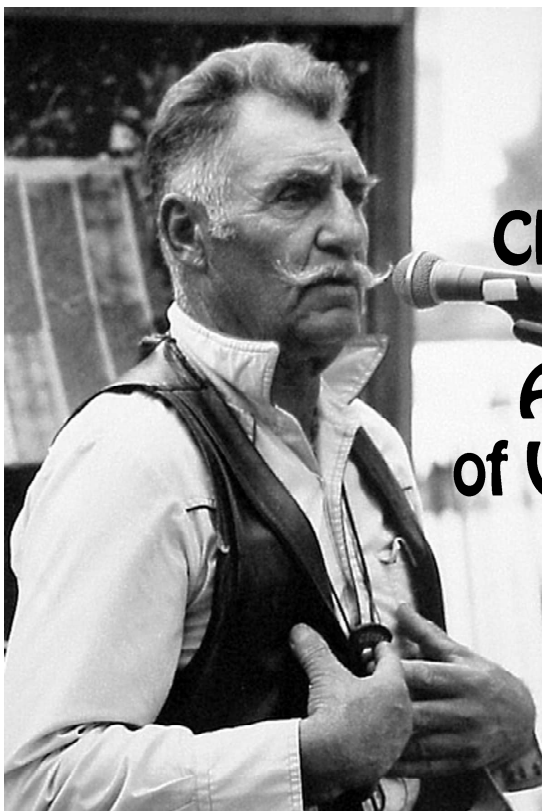
Yesterday and Today in Taos County and Northern New Mexico

Winter 2021

Issue #51

La Iglesia de la Santisima Trinidad

by Deacon Larry Torres



Cleofes Vigil: A Man of Vision

by Michael Miller



The History of The Sagebrush Inn

A publication of the Taos County Historical Society

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

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

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

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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.

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A Message from the TCHS President Ernestina Cordova

Dear Friends and Members,

Merry Christmas y Feliz
Navidad fellow Taoseños!

We are grateful to our wonderful community for helping preserve *la historia de nuestra gente*, and coming together to tell the stories of our culture and bring together our community as one as we share our history and traditions.

We have all had a challenging two years, surviving a global pandemic while continuing to live our lives. The TCHS has been committed to making events available via zoom and, recently, in-person lectures and meetings to keep history alive in Taos.

A highlight of events we have had this past year, with a special thank you to those that attended and assisted:

In June we had our field trip to St. James Hotel and Philmont Scout Ranch in Cimarron. In July Honoree Luncheon "Return of Blue Lake to the Taos Pueblo", with speakers being Vernon Brown, Grandson of Luis Bernal and Rick Romancito.

In August we featured Naomi Sandewess's lecture "The Star Of David" by Zoom, which was well attended.

In September we took a field trip to Jemez Pueblo and lunch at Los Ojos.

In October, we returned to in-person lectures with "Tracking the Chili Line Railroad To Santa Fe" by author Michael Butler.

In November, an in-person lecture, "New Mexico: The French Presence since the 1500s" with special focus on Taos and Northern N.M. by Francois-Marie Patorni.

The 2021 Christmas Luncheon on December 5th featuring guest speaker Dr. Larry Torres. Dr. Torres' program focusing on "Crossing the Camino Real: Folktales."

We hope to see you all in the coming year for our events, lectures and field trips. As always, we give thanks to our members for your continued support.

Merry Christmas. Happy Holidays and Feliz Navidad!

Sincerely,

Ernestina Cordova, President
Taos County Historical Society



LA IGLESIA de la SANTISIMA TRINIDAD (Guards its Many Secrets)

by Deacon Larry Torres

“Set at the base of the of the *Sangre de Cristo* Mountains, directly at the bottom of *El Salto* waterfalls, lies the village of Arroyo Seco and adorning its crown like a gem, stands the Mother Church of *La Santísima Trinidad*. The Church and its surrounding *plazuela* were officially deeded over to the Archdiocese of Santa Fe on November 15, 1894, by its parishioners. The document of transfer was signed by local Commissioners, Seferino Martínez, Juan de Dios Martínez and José Prudencio Cruz. The third Archbishop of Santa Fe, his Excellency, Placide Louis Chapelle, accepted it gratefully and began making plans for the area that was to receive full parochial status fifty six years later, in 1948.

One of the most interesting aspect of this old Arroyo Seco church is the fact that of all of the 94 parishes in the Archdiocese of Santa Fe it is the only one dedicated to God Himself under His manifestation as the triune Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Local lore clings to an ancient story that tells of a triangular stone with a strange luminescence emanating from under it, that had been discovered on that site by early settler brothers named José and Gregorio Martínez. When they unearthed the stone, they found a *bulto* of the Most Holy Trinity underneath it. They enshrined the statuette in a *nicho* and proudly named the Church after it. There are dozens

of churches dedicated to the care of the Virgin Mary and to various favorite saints throughout the Archdiocese of Santa Fe, but this is the only one that bears the name of The Most Holy Trinity. When devout worshipers come to pray in front of the sacred image, they wonder at why such a powerful effigy is missing so many fingers, one foot, and a whole arm. This comes as a result of a traditional practice called “Tribal Catholicism.”



In the days before His Holiness, Pope Pius IX named his Excellency, Jean Baptiste Lamy to be the First Archbishop of Santa Fe in 1851, priesthood was very sparse in this area. Itinerant clerics had no place to spend the night as they travelled from chapel to chapel. They could only sleep within the confines of the sanctuary next to a small fire. They would set up for Mass on the following morning in front of small *retablos* popularly called “saddle icons” that they carried from place to place and then packed them back up on their horse or mule and took them after they had administered the sacraments.

Whenever devout parishioners needed a special prayer answered, they would wrench a finger or a limb off from the effigies and hold them for ransom. Whether the favor they needed was the healing of a sick family member or the return of a husband from war, the appendage was kept hidden. Once the request was granted, the missing finger or arm would be returned. The problem then though,

was how to reattach them back on the *santo*. Of course restorers were even more rare than the *santeros* themselves and so the limb had to be put in a sacred place. Most of them were tossed behind the altar screens awaiting repatriation in the due course of time. Tribal Catholicism was a practice by which missing objects were safeguarded within the sanctuary, but behind the *reredos*.

The *reredos* (altar screen) at the Church of *La Santísima Trinidad* was originally painted in 1824 by The A.J. (Arroyo Hondo) Santero. Infrared scanning has revealed that the altar screen had deteriorated and that within a few years, it needed to be redone. In 1861 it was overpainted by one of the lesser known of the sixteen recognized *santeros* of New Mexico, named José de Gracia Gonzales.



José de Gracia Gonzales had already painted the *reredos* in Las Trampas, in Peñasco, in Santa Barbara and in San Acacio. Since the parishioners in those village communities were very poor though, they couldn't afford to pay the *santero*. In lieu of monetary payment, they offered him a slave girl from the village of Picurís named Atochita Maestas. She became his assistant, sometime model for the Virgin Mary, as is the case in Arroyo Seco and then his wife.

Since the church building was shut down to the public for over thirty years (1962-1995) because a newer church was built, the work of José de Gracia was virtually unknown until it was restored in 1996. Then Pastor, Fr. Vincent de Paul Chávez initiated the first concerted effort to restore this church after its long disuse. It was also Fr. Vincent who imbedded two reliquaries unto the wooden altar. One is a third-class relic of a small piece of cloth touched to the veil of the Virgin Mary. The second is a first-class relic bearing bone fragments of St. Hippolytus. This was Fr. Vincent's way of recognizing the years of stewardship of the late Polly (Hipólita) Martínez who had taken custodial care as sacristan of the building even when it was in disuse. All that the local parishioners knew about the building had been passed down as oral tradition from generation to generation.

The Church *reredos* is visually subdivided into three tiers. The upper tier shows The Most Holy Trinity sitting on top of the world even as it is being created at the beginning of time. Two *jarrones* (ornate vases) flank *La Santísima Trinidad* on either side, showing the bounty of Heaven even in the desert. It is de Gracia's tribute to the first chapter of the Book of Genesis in the Bible. The second tier shows the Holy Family of Mary, Jesus and Joseph blessing the world. The face of Atochita Maestas is clearly recognizable in the face of Mother Mary. The third tier shows St. Anthony of Padua holding the Christ Child and St. Francis of Assisi holding a human skull. It is noteworthy to remark here that traditionally, Franciscan

friars were either clad in brown or in gray. These two saints though, are donning habits of bright indigo blue in deference to Our Lady of Guadalupe who had appeared to the Indian, (Saint) Juan Diego in Mexico City in 1531.

According to the parochial records, there were no local funeral homes in this area between 1834-1951 and so, following common practice, a nocturnal wake would be held in the house of the deceased. His body was washed and then vested in a long white shroud known as a “mortaje.” His coffin would be made of hand-adzed pine wood and covered with black cloth.



Los Hermanos Penitentes

would pray the rosary during the wake while the rest of the parish community fed the mourners, chopped the wood, butchered a pig, kept the chile hot, and took care of the kids for the mourners.

In the absence of priesthood, sometimes the deceased needed more prayers and then the wake might last two or three days, awaiting the coming of itinerant priests every few months. Sometimes, a heavy iron griddle might be placed on the abdomen of the deceased in order to curtail any bloating and if the stench were overpowering, the wake would be held under the trees in open air. If the death occurred during the winter and the ground could not be dug, then the deceased was kept in a cold-storage adobe building called “*un oratorio*” in the middle of the cemetery until the spring thaw. No mechanical backhoes existed in those days and so graves had to be dug with back labor, using picks and shovels, by members of civic groups like *Los Mutuos*, *Los Labradores*, *Los Literarios* or *Los Hermanos Penitentes*.

As was traditional throughout the last three centuries, whenever someone died in a village community, their demise was made known to the rural public by the tolling of the church bell: three knells for a male, two knells for a female and one long, continuous peal announcing the death of a baby. Eight days after they had passed away, they were committed back unto the Lord with the words: “*Memento homo, quia pulvis es et in pulverem reverteris.*” (Remember Man that thou art dust and unto dust thou shalt return). An eight-day memorial rosary and Mass would be offered for the repose of their soul complete with a mock coffin flanked by six huge candlesticks. The mock coffin, covered in black cloth was a catafalque called a “*tumba*” placed before the altar and removed immediately after the service. Faith and devotion to God were the only comfort and solace that people had, to see them through difficult times.

Charles Dickens’ famous novel, “A Tale of Two Cities” begins with the famous opening line: “It was the best of times; it was the worst of times.” Although its story was written some two centuries ago, its dual view of society can to applicable even unto today. For the past few years, the worldwide news on TV has been dominated by the latest attempts to suppress the advancement of the Covid pandemic. Just as noteworthy have been the reports of just how divided, nations have become over whether or not vaccines and booster shots may ease and safeguard the population side with their maladies since time immemorial.

Some of us might remember a time in the 1960s when the population was summoned to be inoculated against the malady called “Hepatitis.” Before that, in the 1950s, many were vaccinated against the “Polio” germ that debilitated its victim’s limbs. The 1940s brought several people to convalesce in the sanatoria of Las Vegas or in in Hot Springs, New Mexico trying to escape “Tuberculosis.” The decade before that, the world was beset by fear of “Whooping Cough” and the turn of the 1900s was marred by widespread Scarletina, commonly known as “Scarlet Fever.” The mid-1800s was terrorized by the disease called “Diphtheria.” The Bubonic Plague ravaged Europe between 1346-1353 and in Biblical times, people were ostracized because they might have been infected by the much-dreaded “Leprosy.”



The reason that the history of the Church of *La Santísima Trinidad* in Arroyo Seco also includes within it, a lesson on diseases, is because the very walls of the Mother Church were built over the bodies of people who were buried within it long before it became a parish church in 1948. For over a hundred years before then, *La Santísima Trinidad* had been a mission *capilla* of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Taos. *La Santísima Trinidad* had been erected by the local *Hermanos Penitentes de Nuestro Padre Jesús Nazareno* between 1825-1834. Its walls measure six feet thick at the base and taper down to four feet at the top. The *vigas* that form its roof were harvested from local mountains and placed upon corbels, crafted by local artisans. Its wooden floor was not installed until 1912, under the direction of Fr. Jean Giraud. For its first hundred and fifty years, the exterior walls were covered in a yellowish gypsum color of white wash called “*tierra vallita*.” Long since the remains of those buried in church yards have disappeared, those interred within the walls still have a story to tell.

One of the traditions recounted the notion that several people had been buried under the floor after the Diphtheria epidemic of 1841 before the wooden laid on top of them. Because there was widespread fear of the spread of the Diphtheria epidemic, many of those presumed to be dead, were said to have been buried alive. The old church records tell stories of mourners who heard knocking on the coffins lids but who were too frightened to let them out, fearing the spread of the epidemic.

In 1996, when the workers removed the plank flooring, they found sufficient evidence that some pre-mature burials had taken place during the 1841 epidemic, but none were exhumed in deference to those resting in peace. *In pace requiescant* (May they rest in peace).

Another found object uncovered in the Mother Church, that interrupted further attempts to investigate anything, was a gold-plated copper medallion, buried under the sanctuary floor. It bore the image of Pope Pius IX. This Pope had decreed the “Syllabus of Errors” by which all religious cults not initiated by the Church were not valid. This edict automatically disavowed the *Penitente* Brotherhood that had built the adobe church. According to tradition, the congregation of *La Santísima Trinidad* summoned Padre Antonio José Martínez of Taos to this mission chapel. He gave a solemn Mass over the effigy bearing the likeness of Pope Pius IX and buried it face-down under the altar. For many decades

this Pope was not liked much by the *Penitentes* and their descendants. The gold medallion bearing his image is still on display in a shadow box kept in the church sacristy since its discovery.

Among the other oddities found during the renovation of the church building, was that over the previous one hundred and seventy some years, four tons of pigeon droppings had been weighing down the wooden *latilla* boards of the ceiling. When the volunteers removed all of that bird poop from the top of them, the *vigas* could breathe again and raised themselves a few inches from their underlying corbels. Upon closer examination of the roof boards, another one of its secrets came to life: Although all the *vigas* had originally been equally spaced, there were two of them in the choir loft that had been placed next to each other, side by side. This seemed odd in a church that had been beautifully planned by its makers.

The thinner one of the two *vigas*, was solid but the thicker one, sounded hollow. Subsequent parishioners found that an unidentified



hand had taken a pencil and written a bit of local church history on the solid, thinner *viga*. In Spanish it said, "In 1921, a great amount of rain fell down on this village. Its adobe homes were melting, and they were flooded. The only place big enough to accommodate the parishioners was this building. Many families came to sleep here but in the middle of the night, the western adobe wall began to crumble, so the men had to work hard throughout the night to repair it. That is when they found that they had to replace the hollow *viga* with this more solid, thinner one." No evidence of a western window toward the sunset has ever been uncovered.

Visitors to the Church of *La Santísima Trinidad* will point to other treasured, devotional objects scattered throughout the Church. One is the huge wooden crucifix attributed to the *Santero* Miguel Herrera that had disappeared from the building and was missing for over a hundred years. It was relocated by the late Louise Trigg at a yard sale in Denver, Colorado and she immediately recognized it as the missing piece. Her daughter, Robin McKinney-Martin, the owner of The Taos News and the Santa Fe New Mexican, returned the huge devotional piece to the parish on the condition

that it should be huge high enough in order that no one should touch it.

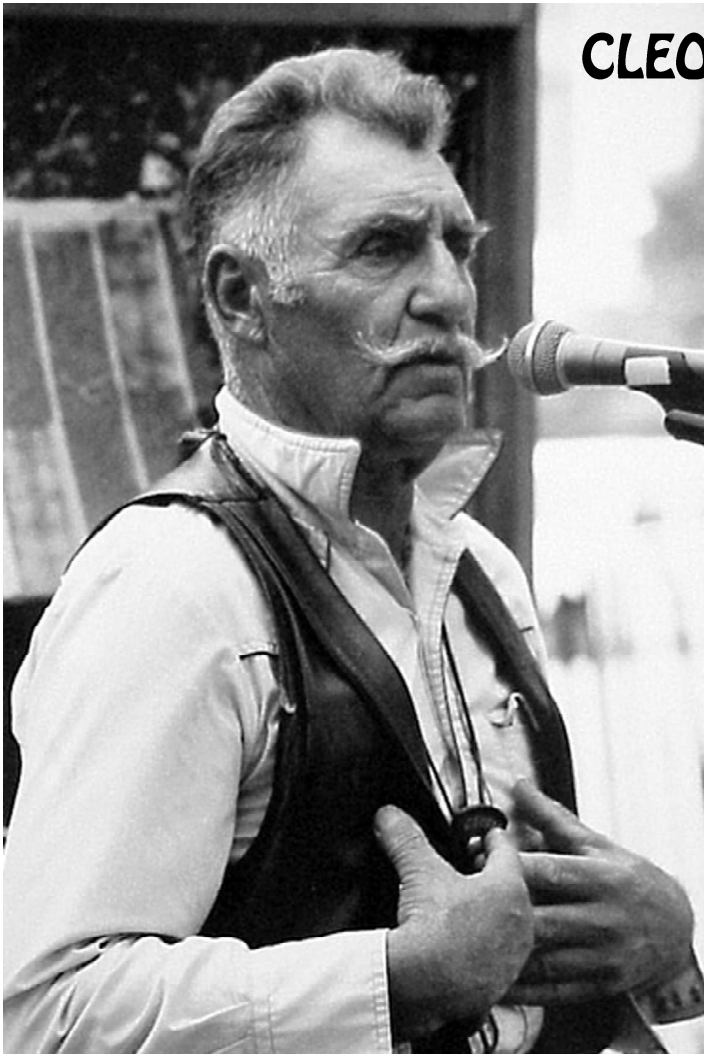
Also quite visible on the western side of the nave, is a huge plaster statue of The Most Holy Trinity itself bought by the parishioners through the efforts of then organist and sacristan, the late Juanita J. Mares. What is remarkable about this statute is that it is a rare depiction of what is theologically known as "The Pre-Incarnation." This means that the determined face if God the Father is telling Jesus (God the Son) that one day He must be born, taking on human flesh, die on a Cross and redeem mankind of its sins. The discreet face on the Jesus shows him bowing to do the will of th Father and the Holy Spirit, in the form of a dove, watches over them both. This piece is identified as The Pre-Incarnation because there are as of yet no stigma wounds on either hands or feet or side of Jesus nor are there any wounds from the missing Crown of Thorns. Jesus is still totally divine, not yet having been born, die or resurrected.

Almost as if to balance this dolorous scene, on the side of the altar is a statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary in her manifestation as the Immaculate Conception. Yet when one looks at the image from the side, she is definitely pregnant, soon to bear the Infant Jesus. This statue was almost destroyed in a church fire in the late 1990s but through the talents of artist Patsy Allen, she has been restored to her former glory. Today it guards the triangular luminescent stone that protected the old *bulto* of *La Santísima Trinidad*.

The Parish of *La Santísima Trinidad* incorporates four village communities besides Arroyo Seco: Arroyo Hondo with its chapel of *Nuestra Señora de los Dolores*, Valdez with its chapel of *San Antonio de Padua*, *San Cristóbal* with its chapel of St. Christopher, and Las Colonias with its chapel of *El Santo Niño de Atocha*. The Mother Church in Arroyo Seco is a semi-functioning church, open to the public on parish feast days and special occasions. Visitors and the faithful alike pray for the repose of recognized and unrecognized people who are buried under and around the Church of *La Santísima Trinidad*:



Señor Dios, que nos dejaste la señal de tu sagrada pasión y muerte; la sábana santa en la cual fue envuelto tu cuerpo santísimo. Cuando por José fuiste bajado de la cruz, concédenos, Señor, oh piadoso salvador que por tu muerte y sepultura santa, te lleves a descansar las benditas ánimas del Purgatorio, a descansar en la gloria de la resurrección donde tú, Señor vives y reinas con Dios Padre en unidad del Espíritu Santo por todos los siglos de los siglos santos, Amén. (Oh Lord who didst leave for us the sign of thy Sacred Passion and death; the holy shroud in which thy most sacred body was wrapped. Because, thou wert taken down from the Cross, grant to us oh Lord, oh most pious Savior, that by thy death and holy burial site, that thou might take the holy souls of Purgatory, to rest in the glory of thy Resurrection where thou livest and reignest in unity with God the Father and the Holy Spirit forever and ever, Amen).



CLEOFES VIGIL: A MAN OF VISION

by Michael Miller

like *La Tierra Bendita* and *Jardines del Bosque* which I co-founded along with Estevan Arellano and others at the Santa Cruz Irrigation District and the National Hispanic Cultural Center for teaching future generations of New Mexicans about the environmental knowledge of the future, present, and past.

According to Maceo Carillo-Martinet, a UNM graduate student and the project coordinator who worked with the students on a daily basis, "It is important to pass on a sense of responsibility to younger generations. Today many communities are completely divorced from their environment. We need to give young people a sense of place in their history, their culture, and their environment," he explained in an oral history interview conducted by the Jardines del Bosque staff.

This curriculum, inspired by Cleofus Vigil of *San Cristobal* in Taos county is an opportunity to engage young people in the environment they will inherit. They will learn the basics of environmental history and conservation. That experience will prepare them for the policy decisions they will have to make as adults and citizens of New Mexico regarding water, conservation, population growth and making the most of the limited and endangered natural resources in the Rio Arriba and the state at large.

La Nacion de Sangre de Cristo is the name Cleofus Vigil gave to his beloved homeland (*la querencia*) in his poetry, singing, and writing about the culture and traditions of northern New Mexico and the *Rio Arriba*. Albert Pike in his publication, *Prose Sketches and Poems*, 1834, describes the boundary of *Rio Abajo* and the *Rio Arriba* as, "halfway between Santa Fe and *Paso del Norte*." These names *Rio Abajo* and *Rio Arriba* are still used today by *nuevomexicanos* to describe the northern and southern sections of the *Rio Grande* and its *bosque*. The *Rio Abajo* is distinguished from the northern regions of the *Rio Arriba* in temperature, landscape and elevation. The *Rio Arriba* extends into southern Colorado as far north as present-day *Pueblo* and is known for its high mountain ranges, cooler temperatures, forest landscapes, and deep gorges and canyons. *La Bajada mesa*, nineteen miles south of Santa Fe is the dividing line between the *Rio Arriba* and *Rio Abajo*. The elevation drop at *La Bajada* is about fifteen hundred feet which designates "Upper River" from "Lower River."

The knowledge and memories of elders in Vigil's *La Nacion*, such as Pablo Romero of Dixon and Andres Martinez of Taos, all life-long *mayordomos* and traditional farmers and ranchers, shared his belief that the *Rio Arriba* is the most beautiful and bountiful bioregion in the nation.

This same belief has a long history going back to 1629, to the *Memorial* of Fray Alonso de Benavides. Benavides traveled and documented his observations during this time in the province of *Nuevo Mexico* for the Archdiocese of Durango and served as the friar for the *Tewa* pueblos. Benavides wrote this about the inhabitants of the *Rio Arriba*, "As long as they have a good crop, they are very content, and wish no riches." The priest believed that there was great wealth and mineral deposits in the land and mountains of the *Rio Arriba*, and he encouraged them to exploit it. "They laughed at him" an unheard thing for Spaniards to do, he wrote sarcastically, "who out of greed for silver and gold would enter Hell itself." The *paisanos* of the region did not covet wealth. They were content with the bounty of the land and water, this historic memorial account reveals. This was the important message that the curriculum mentors and elders wished to share with future generations in the *Jardines del Bosque* program.

To accomplish this goal traditional poetry, *alabados*, and *corridos* were required reading for the students enrolled in the program. Contemporary,

The inspiration for my *nuevomexicano* community education and multi-cultural outreach programs came from a lecture and field trip, I attended, which was presented by Cleofes Vigil of *San Cristobal*, *Nuevo Mexico* in the 1970s at the UNM Northern Branch College in *Santa Cruz*. Vigil was a farmer and herdsman as well as a poet and educator who documented and performed the *corridos* of northern New Mexico and taught the *memorias de indigena* (indigenous memories) in the schools and community centers of the *Rio Arriba* region.

His writing and teachings were about the Earth, the "Mother of All Life" and the knowledge and love of the land and water of the *Rio Arriba*. "This ancient knowledge is taken from the native goddess, *Tonantzin* who later became the *Virgen de Guadalupe*, (*Nuestra Madre*) the Earth Mother of All Life," he explained in his presentation.

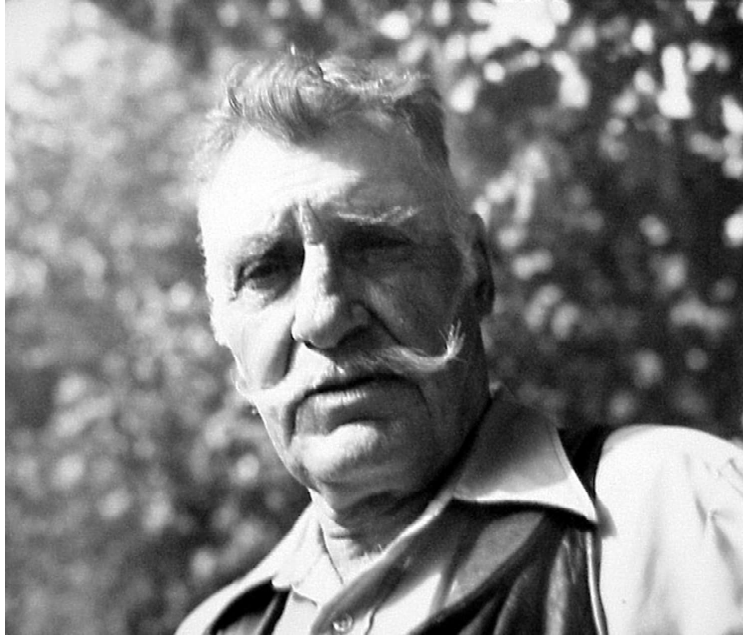
Following his lecture he took us on a "field trip" a walk through the *bosque* from Santa Cruz to the confluence where the *Rio Santa Cruz* meets the *Rio Grande*. His teaching style was like that of a loving grandfather passing his knowledge on to the next generation. His knowledge of the natural world was deep, sincere, and authentic, in the tradition of his ancestors who passed it on to him. Each plant, animal, bird, and tree had a story and a use in the world that he shared with them. He rejected the material world and embraced the natural world with sincerity and integrity.

Poetry, music, (*corridos y alabados*) and woodcarving were his means of communication with the outside world and within his own environment. He was well-known as a poet of the old tradition, in the *Rio Arriba* and as a chronicler of culture and history in the region. Sophisticated beyond his simple lifestyle he was known to embrace the truth to be as cruel and beautiful as the Mother Earth.

This traditional approach inspired the curriculum for cultural programs

living poets such as James Aranda, Adan Baca, Manuel Gonzalez, Coleen Gorman, Mike Ipiotis, E.A. "Tony" Mares, Carlos Martin, and "Jimmy" Santiago Baca were added to the scientific, humanities, literary, agricultural, and natural history faculty. Their were poetry readings and poetry slams on a daily basis and plenty of classroom time was devoted to poetry composition in between *bosque* work assignments, tree planting, scientific observation, and water and land research projects.

The poetry allowed for communication through verse. It closed the generational gaps between young and old, and allowed for a dialogue to develop that held promise for the future. The readings (poetry slams) were passionate and meaningful and were often the highlight of the



work day. Cleofus Vigil would have been pleased.

The following is the first stanza of Cleofus Vigil's classic verse, *A Madre Tierra*, which he recited and sang for me and the other participants in the *bosque* field trip in the 1970s, as we ate our lunch in the coolness of the river under the ancient *alamo* trees of the Rio Grande.

A MADRE TIERRA

Hay pobres que no se humillan

Some poor people will not be humiliated.

hay valientes compadradas,

they bravely join in brotherhood with others

aunque nos falte el dinero

even though we may lack money

siempre andamos en manada

we are always together

aunque descalzos pero contentos

shoeless but content

con la panza agotagada

with the stomach satisfied

llena de quelites verdes

full of green lambs quarters

y esas pardas verdolagas.

and those dark sorrel greens.

In 1984, Cleofus Vigil was inducted as a National Heritage Fellow with the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA).

Michael Miller served as the founding Director of the Center for Southwest Research at UNM. A writer and a poet he has published articles and books on New Mexico and the Southwest. He is a contributor to TAOS: A TOPICAL HISTORY. His website is Voces de Santa Fe. Michael Miller.

THE METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH OF TAOS

by Bill Christmas

After the American Civil War ended in 1865, sustained Methodist evangelism began in the New Mexico Territory when John Dyer was assigned to the Colorado Conference. His activities included preaching sporadically in the northern regions of New Mexico. He was instrumental in attracting his friend, Dr. Thomas Harwood and his wife Emily to New Mexico to assist him.

The couple arrived in 1869, and thus began a long and fruitful period. Father Dyer departed the region in 1870, leaving Dr. Harwood as the lone Methodist circuit rider for a vast area that stretched from El Paso, Texas all the way into the Arizona Territory and extended north to areas of southern



Colorado. Over the course of his long tenure of 47 years Dr. Harwood would accomplish the nearly impossible task of establishing many Protestant congregations in the predominantly Catholic southwest in competition with other Protestant evangelists.

C.M. Chase (1829-1902) was a Vermont journalist who traveled in the New Mexico Territory and the State of Colorado in 1881. He kept a journal during his travels that he later published. His impressions of Taos were quite negative except for the natural beauty of the broad valley and majestic mountains ringing it. He characterized Taos as a "purely Mexican village" with a population of about 1,000 comprised of dwellings he referred to as "mud boxes," i.e., adobe huts. He had a deep disdain for the inhabitants, who appeared to him to be unclean, shiftless, and unreliable. He noted that there were "two mud churches (Catholic) in the village, both with mud floors, and without seats of any description." He bemoaned the lack of any public services including no library, discernible school, public hall, fire protection, newspaper, public spirit, or society. He concluded, "All the general crowd think or care about, is to live along just as they have from time immemorial..."

Dr. and Mrs. Harwood had no children, but in 1875 their nephew Thomas M. Harwood was sent to live with them. He was about 12 years old at the time and became a student at the Methodist run La Junta Institute in Tiptonville. Following college in New

York State, he returned to New Mexico in 1883. He was assigned by Dr. Harwood to Taos as the supply pastor to form a church and run a school there as the missionary teacher. T.M. Harwood had his work cut out for him, but he had a big advantage over C.M. Chase - he spoke Spanish, as did his uncle. He spent about a year in Taos and organized a congregation of 24 members.

In 1884, the General Conference at Dr. Harwood's request, divided the work in the territory into English and Spanish Missions. The recently formed Taos group was assigned to the Spanish Mission, i.e., it was a Spanish-speaking congregation. Between 1884 and 1887, the small congregation undertook the planning and building of an adobe church on a low ridge, a short distance east of the town plaza.



The following paragraph is quoted from Dr. Harwood's history of the Spanish and English Missions in the Report of 1888 (Vol 2; page 88):

We erected two churches in the northern group of appointments, one at Espanola and one at Taos. The church at Taos was badly damaged in a storm, which involved extra cost of several hundred dollars. It was dedicated on December 9th. We were considerably indebted to Rev. Albert Jacobs for his energy in aiding in the erection of the building. He, being a carpenter, did much of the work with his own hands. Rev. T.M. Harwood, my nephew, was our first preacher and teacher in Taos. He had a good school and a fair congregation. The church organization was due to him more than to any one else.

The undated picture above is from the N.M. Conference archive. It likely shows the new church with the congregation gathered in the foreground at the time of the dedication on December 9, 1888. There are about 30 adults a dozen children in the group. The tall, bearded man standing without a hat in the back row, fifth from the left, is probably Dr. Harwood, who made the dedication. This formality did not occur until the structure was debt free and owned by the conference. The original church was a rectangular adobe structure (45 x 30 feet) with a south entrance and a territorial style roof on which was a modest bell steeple. There were a total of six vertical church windows, three each on the east and west walls. The adobe walls were built on fieldstones laid on bare ground. They were originally about 18 feet high and are 24" thick at the base.

It is difficult to find accurate population statistics for the new Mexico Territory in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, but reasonable estimates help to give an idea about conditions then. According to Walker, the entire population of the New Mexico Territory in 1890 was 153,598 and the heaviest concentration was along the Rio Grande river valley, especially in the north. Martinez notes that in 1890, there were 940 members of the Methodist Episcopal Church in the New Mexico Territory or about 0.6% of the total population.

The population of Taos at the turn of the 19th century was about 1500, so the protestant congregations were small making it difficult to support a pastor and maintain a church building. In Taos, at this time, the major competitor with the MEC for members was the Presbyterian Church. Walker documents a sharp rise in the number of Methodist members of Hispanic congregations in New Mexico between 1870-1900, followed by a fall over the next three decades. It begins with about 100 members in 1870 and rapidly peaks to about 1000 by 1890 before falling fairly rapidly to about 230 in 1930.

The MEC church in Taos initially did well. Around the turn of the century, a parsonage was built next door to the church on the west side. by 1910, the Taos Society of Artists was forming and of the founding members, E.I. Couse and J.H. Sharp, became neighbors of the church to the east and north respectively.

In 1913, the church sold a 30-foot strip of land on the eastern boundary of their lot to Joseph Sharp so he could gain access to the road in front of the church (now Quesnel Street). I suspect that the church began to feel some financial stress around this time, because in 1924 they sold almost one third of their remaining lot to Sharp.

Finally, on September 3, 1928, the church closed its doors and sold the entire remaining property, including the parsonage to Rev. Milton A. Spotts, who at the time was a minister of the local Presbyterian Church. The church became primarily a residence for Rev. Spotts and his wife Frieda, but it is likely that he performed marriages and other functions in the church until the middle of the 20th century.

Apparently the church was in dire need of repairs by the time it went defunct, because in 1929 Spotts had a new pueblo-style roof built to replace the territorial-style roof. Also, after it became a residence, one of the church windows on the west side was sacrificed to make another entrance plus an entry room and a small restroom (prior to this, the congregation used an outhouse in the field behind the church). A sun porch, which hid the original entrance, was added on the south side of the building and over the years it was enclosed to become a sun room. Spotts lived in the house until his death in 1967.

Since that time was a succession of owners. Some further improvements have been made behind the church to the north, notably the addition of some sleeping quarters and a partially enclosed small patio, but the church space remains as it was over one-hundred years ago. It is in the Taos Historic District and is listed as a Contributing Structure.

ELACIO LAFAYETTE JARAMILLO: MY FATHER ...AND SOME STORIES HE USED TO TELL

by Juanita J. Lavadie

I grew up in Taos, Abajo La Loma, in la vecindad de los Trujillos, to be specific. That is through my maternal family connections. But, my father left Rio Arriba when he married my mother, and we grew up on Trujillo Lane, with our constant family visits in Rio Arriba, Española, La Madera, on to Vallecitos and Cañon de Vallecitos.

My dad was born Elacio Lafayette de Jaramillo, March 5, 1906, hijo de Juanita Jáquez Chacon y Elijo Jaramillo. My grandfather had a ranch with ample land for his ganados of sheep, to include some cattle. There is still a small patch of that Jaramillo land on the current BLM maps, that is currently owned by Jaramillo primos familiares. My father had other primos, on the Chacon side of Cañon de Vallecitos who were also named Lafayette. He was in the middle of the chronology of sibling births, all seventeen of them. Many of his siblings did not survive childhood because of pneumonia or because of infant health complications. In the cultural tradition of survival, everyone had work and chores. For the youngest, there were the responsibilities of bringing in firewood for the home and of bringing in water. If any elder had need to drink water, it was expected that one of the younger children would bring a cupful and stand, waiting with arms crossed, for the elder to finish drinking to take the empty cup back to the kitchen area.

My father was to have been baptized in the Roman Catholic Church, but on that winter-storm day, the possibility was great during that his padrinos picked him up from the ranch, to take him to be baptized but soon found themselves stranded in the snow. They returned him to his family later that day to say that the records were left at the church. [There were no records on his baptism, to prove his age on his retirement, and that was complicated when he lied about his age when he started his education at the McCurdy Missionary School.]

Riding horses was an automatic pastime among the youth. To help out with the sheep, the ability to ride horse as a child was a given expectation. That meant, for my grandparents, that if an older sibling went out to on sheepherding responsibility, he would be accompanied by younger siblings so that he would not be alone, and so that the younger ones would learn. In my youth, I envisioned his stories to have taken place during his pre-teen years at the youngest, but as the years passed, I learned that on some of his sheepherding adventures, he could have been as young as 6 years old. Still, with his storytelling skills, my dad would tell of one adventure after another. The adventures were not just of animal husbandry, but also one that revealed his spirituality as his narrations continued.

One of his oldest memories he related was while he was up in a narrow canyon with one of his older brothers. It was late summer roundup when they got caught in an early snowstorm that endured through the night. They both kept each other awake by the campfire while the sheep they collected were close-by. It was a



brutal night, but they kept the fire going while supporting each other in their exhaustion as they would sing their favorite songs. Then, as the night grew long past midnight, with their voices cracking from long use in the cold winter storm air, they heard a sound close-by in the palisades. It was a beautiful sound, melodic and ethereal. The music continued as they listened, enraptured. When the music stopped, they would shout out, “¡Más, Más!”.

The beautiful music continued. The music kept them up, as they listened to its beauty. Every time the music would stop, in their rapture to hear more, they would rouse themselves shouting across the nocturnal white-out for the melodies to continue. This went on and on as the two brothers kept the fire going. Finally, the time came when the music stopped. Shortly after the new silence in the night, the sky began to lighten with the coming morning. Eager to meet the musician, the two boys scrambled to the steep sides of the canyon, but there was no sign of anyone, no one having left any tracks or other signs of being there. My father promised to himself that someone of his family would make that same music. Years later, when my father left the ranch, to move on to his academic education, he heard the violin and recognized the music timbre of that magical but dangerous night. It eventually fell to my sister to receive violin lessons, but she left the violin for the clarinet, her preference. But, that is a different story.

To continue with my father and his mountain experiences, he had already been exposed to English during the short time he was working with miners near Hopewell Lake. Much older with responsibilities to keep watch over the sheep, alone, over the summertime, he met a missionary traveling back country. The missionary offered company with conversation, and also, lessons on the alphabet to begin reading in English. Through the days and days up in the mountain canyons and meadows in his solitude, my father learned to read, to study with the book that the missionary had available, the Bible. My father would read stories

and passages, becoming familiar with the Bible when it was finally time to return to the village with impending seasonal changes.

Flushed with pride in his new abilities to read, he was anxious to share conversation with the village priest on what he had been learning from the Bible. He was shocked at the vehemence the priest displayed, rebuking him for keeping company with and receiving the Bible at the hands of a Protestant heathen. The priest threw him out of the church in admonishment. Stunned my father met with other missionaries coming from Española, telling them what happened. At that, he was offered a scholarship to attend McCurdy School with boarding provided. He was nineteen at the time, embarrassed to be starting school at that age, so he lied and said he was sixteen. That switch on the record was also to come back to him later, but for this story, he was admitted to the school, the first of the family to leave the ranch to start an education. He went on to receive a scholarship to attend the United Methodist College in Omaha, Nebraska where he got his Bachelor's degree. He continued his studies in language in Oregon, becoming a Deacon at the First Presbyterian Church in Taos.

My father was my first "art" teacher. He taught us to visualize.

Under the vivid New Mexico skies, we would be anywhere, where he would stop us to see, pointing out to the clouds, so that we would make out the different



shapes, some cloud shapes he would name, and some cloud formations, he would let us point out and name. The possibilities were endless. Then we would make up stories or sing songs about those shapes. He had a beautiful tenor voice and loved to sing. With family visits, my dad and the Tías would engage in 3-4 part harmony on many classic songs, hymns and popular ballads.

When he was teaching in the school at Cañon, here in Taos, he would collect discarded crayons in a shoe box for use. At the end of the school year, that shoe box would come home. From there, that box was put to use by my sister and me, still in early elementary school years. The most vivid use of those crayons was on rainy or stormy days when we were confined indoors to occupy ourselves. My father would bring out the shoe box and we would cover the refrigerator with drawings. My father would draw along with us. I learned to draw animals, mountain horizons. Cloud imaginations went right along, generating energy from thoughts shared in process, through to the fingertips holding waxy sticks of color.

Over the years, I have with me, a grainy xerox photograph of a photo that was in the Taos News in the late 1970's. There is a photo of the El Prado Liquor Store mural, being freshly painted by Enriqueta Vasquez and me. But, guess who is standing on the ladder holding a paintbrush doing detail work on the mountain horizon on that wall. Yes, it was my dad.

HISTORY OF

Constructed in 1929, the Sagebrush Inn & Suites was built and first operated by Frank and Helen Kentnor who opened the hotel under the name El Chamiso Lodge in 1931. By 1933 the Kentnors changed the name to the Sagebrush Inn (Sagebrush being the English translation of Chamiso) as it was more recognizable to early guest who were typically making the journey from the East Coast to Arizona and back. This adobe walled charming wayside hotel offered 13 guestrooms that quickly became known for authentic Southwest décor and warm hospitality – as it is today.

Shortly after the hotel opened, the Kentnors added a dining room to the hotel at the request of their guests who did not want to make the several mile journey to Taos Plaza for meals. In those early years, the hotel was not able to offer a bar due to Prohibition, but guests delighted in playing cards in the evenings and appreciated the jigsaw puzzles the Kentnors kept fireside for entertainment. Later in life, the Sagebrush Inn would be home to an illegal gambling room until getting raided in 1950.

Over the years, Sagebrush Inn & Suites has grown to include 156 guestrooms and suites, over 13,000 square feet of meeting and event space, and has developed a reputation for authentic Southwest cuisine as well as live music at Sagebrush Cantina. While it has been restored and expanded over the years, the Inn remains a historic icon within the Taos community, serving visitors and Taosño alike. Most recently, the hotel was purchased in 2017 and is undergoing renovations and improvements to restore the Sagebrush Inn to its iconic glory.

Historical Highlights:

The main lobby and original guestrooms are constructed from 10-inch-thick adobe block.

When it opened in 1931, rooms went for \$3.00 per night and meals were \$.75 – a pretty penny in the years of the Depression.

In the early 1930s, Georgia O'Keeffe occupied what is now The Artist's Loft and is believed to have been greatly inspired by the room's stunning views during the year she lived there.

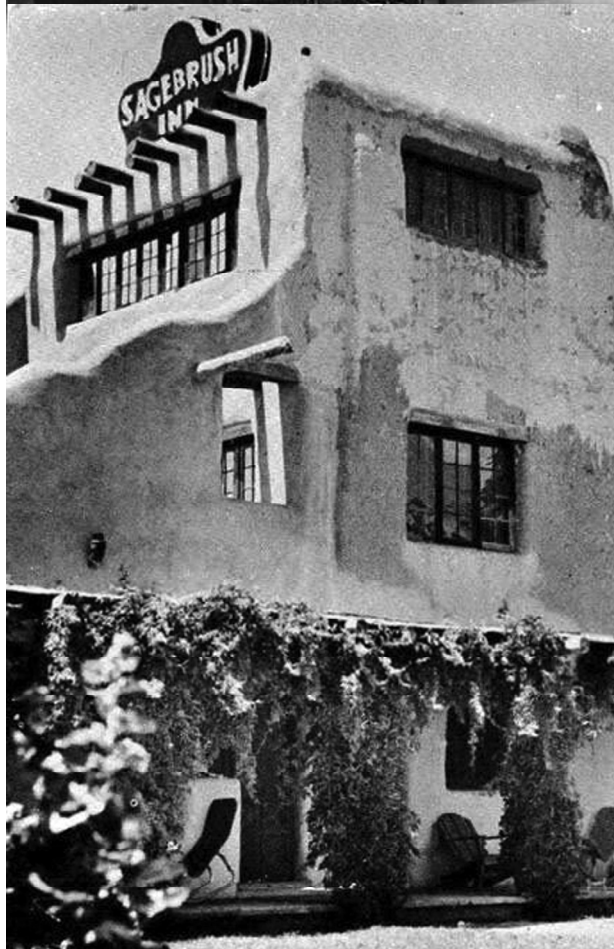
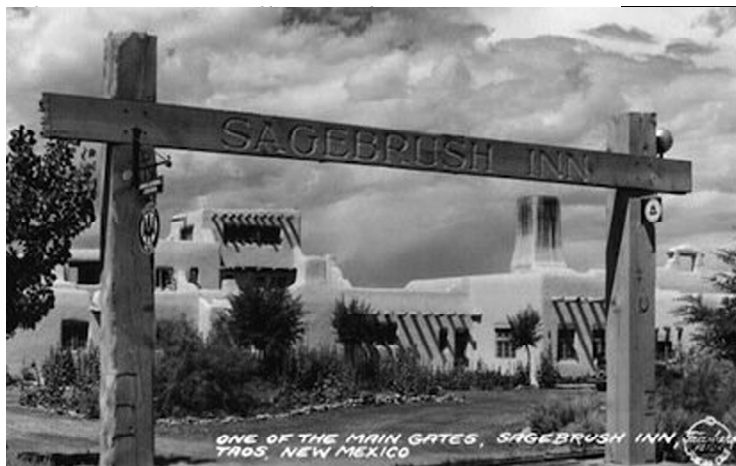
In 1944, the hotel served as home to the Los Alamos Boys School when the US Army took over the school's original site in Los Alamos.

In the late 1940s, the Sagebrush Inn was home to an illegal gambling hall featuring Craps, Blackjack, and a Slot Machine.

Scenes from the iconic movie Easy Rider were shot in the fields of sagebrush behind the hotel. When filming the movie Twins, the cast stayed at the Sagebrush with Arnold Schwarzenegger requiring two rooms, one for sleeping and one for all of his weights and workout equipment. Over the years, the list of celebrities and dignitaries that have graced the Sagebrush Inn is long and distinguished including many artists, actors, and even a President of the United States. A small sampling of some of our more notable guests include Georgia O'Keeffe, Ansel Adams, Marlon Brando, Peter Fonda, Dennis Hopper (a frequent bar patron), Gene Hackman, Paul Newman, Robert Redford, Arnold Schwarzenegger, Danny DeVito, President Gerald Ford, and R.C. Gorman (whose artwork can be found throughout the hotel and even in the floor).

THE SAGEBRUSH INN

by "Sagebrush Lou"



Merry Christmas Happy Holidays Feliz Navidad & Happy New Year!

TCHS Lectures
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
PO Box 2447 i Taos, NM 87571

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.