

# AYER Y HOY en TAOS

Yesterday and Today in Taos County and Northern New Mexico

Winter 2022

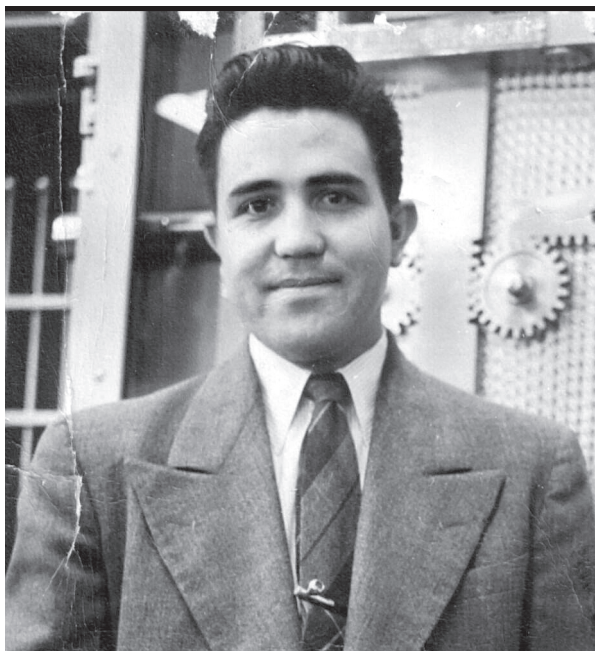
Issue #53

## Kit Carson Road Memories Of The 30s & 40s



by **Sadie Ortiz Knight  
& Benton Bond**

## In Memorium: Eloy A. Jeantete



4/6/1928 - 11/6/2022

## FROM TAOS TO WASHINGTON:

**Benigno  
Cardenas  
Hernandez**

(1862-1954)

by  
**Virginia Dodier**



## FAVORITE DESTINATIONS



by **Dave Cordova**

A publication of the Taos County Historical Society

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and Northern New Mexico

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

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

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

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

### Editor

Dave Cordova

The Taos County Historical Society is a New Mexico non-profit organization dedicated to the study and preservation of the historical resources of Taos County and Northern New Mexico. Membership is open to any interested person, regardless of residence.

### Officers of the Board

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## A Message from the TCHS President Ernestina Cordova

Dear Friends and Members,

The Taos County Historical Society's goal is to preserve our history, and along the way, learn about our history to appreciate what has occurred in our community. We are, again, requesting anyone who has stories of the past to share them with us so they are remembered. Please share your stories, do not keep them to yourself.



In the spring of 2022, a lot of Northern New Mexico faced the devastation of the Hermits Peak and Calf Canyon Wildfire. Many families in our communities were impacted by this devastating disaster. Many of our friends and neighbors suffered great losses, and recovery is still in progress. This significant event brought the community of Taos County together and, with assistance from State and Federal resources, are helping in the recovery. We have learned that we are a community of people that care for each other when tragedy happens.

The Historical Society itself has had a prosperous year with educational field trips that started in July with a wonderful field trip to the Fort Garland Colorado Museum and a tour the San Antonio Padua Catholic Church in Questa. Lectures continued in person. In August, Virginia Dodier presented her family history, sharing stories of her Hernandez-Manby House. In September, Celina Kaelin's presentation of the "Old Spanish Trail," and in October, John Ubelaker's presented a history of "Fort Burgwin." November's lecture on "Cautivos y Criados Cultural" by Dr. Enrique Lamadrid concluded our lectures for 2022.

The Historical Society received some historical library books and the archival committee completed processing these gifts to TCHS. Phase one of the Old Courthouse Construction project has begun and we look forward to the completion of this phase of construction. As we end 2022, I wish to thank all our committees for their hard work and dedication in supporting TCHS mission of preserving history.

**FELIZ NAVIDAD  
Y PROSPERO AÑO NUEVO!**

Sincerely,

*Ernestina Cordova, President  
Taos County Historical Society*



# KIT CARSON ROAD (Formerly Raton Road)

## Memories of the 30s and 40s

by Sadie Ortiz Knight, completed by Benton Bond

I grew up half a mile from Taos Plaza on what was then known as Raton Road. Our home was just one block inside the boundary of the school bus route, so my brothers and I walked to school, about a mile or so from our home. The homes and businesses along the road became very familiar to me and many of the people I saw on my walks back and forth became friends. I am going to give you a tour of this road from one block east of my home to the east corner of Taos Plaza as I remember it then.

Beginning with the home of one of Taos' famous artists, E. Martin Hennings, his wife Helen, and daughter, also named Helen. Their home was on the south side of the road, at the edge of the populated mile from town. They had the only swimming pool that I knew of at that time, located in their front yard. Helen was younger than I, so she was not one of my classmates. Mrs. Hennings did not drive and I remember seeing her walking to town, a tall lady who always wore a hat. Their home is now The Willows Inn.

Across from their home was the Walter Witt home. I had a passing acquaintance with their daughter, Irene, who was older than I by several years. The home was not built like the rest of the neighborhood but had a pitched roof and a long veranda in front. This home is now occupied by the widow of merchant and businessman, Phillip Cantu, Sr.

On the south side of the street was the Capt. O'Hay Court, owned by Captain O'Hay and his wife Dorothy. I remember that they owned a racehorse named Gay Dalton, who used to win races all the time. The property went through several hands and is now owned by Bert Cantu and his wife May. The former office is a package liquor store.

Across the street was the large two-story adobe home of Miles Boyer and his family. The Boyers had one son, Jack, and two daughters, Alice and Betty. Jack and his father had a grocery store and market at the northeast corner of the plaza and as a little girl I remember Jack walking to work early in the morning, whistling as he strode along. He whistled beautifully and I enjoyed listening to him. Jack was subsequently a member of the 200th Coast Artillery that was captured by the Japanese during World War II and a survivor of the Bataan Death March. His sister, Alice, married Harvey Bond, and they lived in a small cottage behind the Boyer home. Betty was a 4-H leader and I remember going to meetings at her home when I was around 10 and 11 years old. Later on, when Jack was gone, I used to babysit for his wife Mildred, taking care of their little boy, Ronnie. Sometimes Mr. Boyer would get home first, and he would walk me home. I was

about 14 years old. I earned 50 cents an hour and was delighted to have my own money to spend.

On the other side of the road was the beautiful home of Mary L. Dolan and her son, Pete. She was the widow of Peter Dolan, a merchant in town who owned a store at one time on the corner where Kay Decker's shop, Creative Expressions, is located. Mrs. Dolan was a very devout Catholic. Her daughter Michelle, was a



member of the Sisters of Loretto, and her son Pete, was an altar boy and then a priest's assistant all of his life at Our Lady of Guadalupe Church in town. The church where he served burned down in 1961 and the site is now a parking lot for First State Bank. Current owners of this home are Ruben and Crucita Vigil.

As a little girl I remember going to visit Mrs. Dolan. She was always very friendly and kind. She always had cookies and milk for me. I loved to go to her house because it was so beautifully furnished. She was much more wealthy than most of the people I knew and her beautifully kept home with all its lovely furnishings was fascinating to a little girl.

Across the road from the Dolan home was the house rented by Don G. Secrest and his wife Adelaide, whose son, John, was the new boy in my third-grade class. When he and young Harry Packard enrolled in third grade, it was a big thing, as not many new people with youngsters came to Taos in those days. John's older sister Mary Alice was away at college and seldom came home. I do recall hearing her sing and play the piano when she was visiting on school breaks. The Secrests had come from Dawson when the coal mines there closed. Mr. Secrest was hired as a cashier at First State Bank, located where the Adobe Boutique is now on the northwest corner of the Plaza. Sometimes his walk to work and my walk to school coincided and we made the walk

together. He always called me “Sally” never by my name - I never knew why. He was always interested in what I was reading as my arms were always full of books and some of them were from the Harwood Library where I kept a very active library card on file. I enjoyed our walks and our conversation. My relationship with John had its ups and downs, as youngster’s friendships go. Sometimes we were great buddies and he would share his huge collection of *Big Little Books* and his Glenn Miller records, other times we “hated” each other. We went through high school and graduation together. I was totally devastated when he drowned in a fishing accident about six years later. He was my first classmate to die.

Right next door to the Secrests’ was our home. My father had built the house almost single-handedly. It began with three rooms and as our family grew, more and more rooms were added until it had four bedrooms and two baths. Around 1936, my father built a curio shop attached to the front of the house. He sold Chimayo blankets, many of which he wove in one of three looms in the shop, and pottery and jewelry. The pottery and jewelry was traded with the Santa Clara, San Ildefonso and San Juan Indians and the jewelry he traded with Navajos and with Maisel’s store in Albuquerque. He also made trading trips to Gallup and brought back Navajo rugs to sell in the shop. Eventually my father closed the shop and took down most of the structure, leaving only the part attached to the main house and converting it into a master bedroom. Our home is now the Milagro Bed & Breakfast, which includes a two-bedroom house my father had built for rental purposes and which two of my brothers occupied at different times.

Just west of our house was El Monte Motel, which still exists and continues to thrive. The first owner was Rod Kiker and when he and his family left town, his two old-maid sisters Vesta and Stella Kiker managed for many years. It has gone through several owners since then and is now owned by George and Pat Schumacher. It remains basically the same as it has for years with the addition of two units in the rear and a larger office and managers quarters.

My husband and I lived in one of the little kitchenette units when first we married. The Kiker sisters were running it at that time.

The next home on the south side of the street was the Santistevan home. Sam and Della Santistevan and their family lived there. After Sam’s tragic death in 1941, Della was left to raise her family of four and went to work as a waitress at La Cocina in town. Her image was one of the ones obliterated when the new owner of Taos Cowboy destroyed the murals on the walls of the lounge at the rear of the restaurant, owned at the time by Vern Matheney, and his wife. This was a tragic loss of history for Taos.

Across the street from the Santistevan home was the home of J. B. Martinez Sr. and his wife Matilde. They had eight children, just like in my family, and several of them were our playmates. When I was growing up, I was a tomboy because I used to play with my two brothers and their friends, but occasionally Alice Martinez would join in the games and her friend, Janet Kiker.

Across a bridge from their yard, over the Rio Fernando, was the home of Max and “Tita” Luna. Mr. Luna was a well-known and talented furniture maker. His wife was a schoolteacher at the Taos elementary school (my first-grade teacher). They were childless for many years and then adopted a niece and raised her as their own. Mr. Luna worked for a number of years at the local vocational school, as a furniture making instructor and then for the public schools.

Back on the highway and across a small bridge was Burch Camp. This motel was owned and managed by the Burch family for many years. They also owned a dry goods store on the plaza called Burch Store, of course. I remember going there one evening with my mother who was shopping for clothes for me. I was about 7 years old. Apparently at one time in the 1930s, some of the merchants kept their stores open in the evenings.

Next to the office of the motel was the home of a Burch sister, Zella. The stand of huge old cottonwoods was as tall as they are now. The motel office is now Quast’s Gallery, and the motel is the Adobe Wall Motel.

The house referred to, just west of Burch Camp, was the home of Alvin Burch. It was where he raised his family of six children. He also had a total of five stores in the surrounding area, including the store on Taos Plaza. He wanted his children to learn Tiwa and Spanish, to communicate with the local populace.

Alvin planted the cottonwood trees on Burch Street and on Kit Carson Road by Burch Camp; he also planted the Burch Orchard on the south side of the road. This was about 1903. The house was later occupied by Zella Burch Denton, one of the six Burch children.

An unusual occurrence happened to Mr. Burch while living in this residence. One evening, he and his wife Sarah Barnum Burch, heard some noise outside. His wife said, “Don’t go out there.” She had feeling it wasn’t safe. The next morning, he went outside and there was a man hanging from a tree above the bridge.

Continuing on the north side of the street was Doc James grocery and gas station. Doc, as he was known to everyone, and his wife ran this neighborhood grocery for many years. All the children, within walking distance, patronized their store whenever they had some pennies or a nickel to spend. My brother and I would go there and with a nickel between us, would buy a Mounds candy bar to share. In those days we got a good-sized bar and we got Mounds because there were two pieces per package. Then we would have to hide from my older brother to eat it, or we wouldn’t have much for ourselves. The Jameses had only one child, daughter they named Patsy Jo. She is now Mrs. Max Evans, wife of the author, and live in Albuquerque.

On, up the street at, the corner of Las Cruces Road and the Raton highway was the home of Palemon and Margaret Santistevan. Margaret ran a beauty shop in one room of her home. I got my first perm there. Those were the days when they hooked your hair up to these terrible machines that cooked your hair if the beautician didn’t watch the time carefully.



Next to their home, was the home of Adolfo Martinez, who later married Alice Martinez. Alice worked for many years as school nurse and who still lives in the same house. Her husband died many years ago.

Across the street was where Frank Montoya and wife lived. Frank sold land lots across from home and south. His wife was a nurse. At one time, there was a Tastee Freeze across the street from the Martinez home. The soft ice cream was great and, as a teenager, I enjoyed the treat now and then.

The Couse pasture was next and remained a pasture for years until the town fathers leased part of it, several years ago, to use as a parking lot. The house on the hill above Quesnel Road was the Couse home and still belongs to the Couse family. Mr. Irving Couse was one of the founders of the Taos Society of Artists, and in fact, was the first president of the group. He is best known for his paintings of Indians and many Taos Pueblo Indians were his models. He died in 1936 and these paintings have become very valuable and most of them are in museums or private collections.

I remember his yard man and gardener, Aloys Liebert. He was always busy on the grounds and the back gardens were beautiful.

The Couse' next door neighbor was fellow artist, Joseph Sharp. Their homes were joined, and Mr. Sharp's studio was built like a chapel, complete with belfry. I remember seeing him sitting in front of his studio at his easel and a sunshade over his head. He too was well-known for his Indian paintings, including many tribes from all over the west. His home is the Hirsh Fine Arts gallery. On the north side of the road just above the entrance to Morada Lane that leads to the Mable Dodge Luhan house, was the home of Ernest and Rose Martinez. This Victorian style house was always eye-catching for me and I was delighted when Barbara and Tom McCarthy, who added it to their bed and breakfast business retained its style and restored it beautifully. Across the street, leading to Kit Carson Cemetery, was the Benavides home, where Barbara McCarthy's parents lived and where she her brother grew up.

The next home was that of Tom Holder, who was the agent for game and fish in Taos County. His niece, Dorothy, was my schoolmate for a short while. For a number of years the Taos County Welfare offices were located here, before it was occupied by the Alcohol Treatment Center.

The next house, the Cheetham Family home, was owned by Lowell and Mary. Their kids were Francie and Johnny. Lowell

was a surveyor by trade, but they had a music store in the front part of the building. Johnny was born in the back room of the house. The family moved to Albuquerque where Lowell continued surveying work. Johnny went to UNM, majoring in Music, and later became a college professor. Francie has passed away.

The residence was sold to Tommy Lewis, a famous local artist. The building became a residence and gallery known as Taos Art Gallery. A Taos Pueblo lady helped manage the gallery. It was said she sold more art than anyone else. Her name was Clara Martinez.

The building was then sold to Tom and Barbara McCarthy and made into a bed-and-breakfast, Casa Benavides, named after her parents.

Rena Rosequist's Mission Gallery occupies part of what was the old Sharp property, across the street.

The Charles Reynolds Gallery was next, and this property is now the Parks Gallery.

The adobe structure with a walled-in patio behind a large blue door was the Blue Door Gallery owned by Harold and Hilda Street. When they left for Santa Fe, the building was taken over by the Taos Book Shop and remains that today.

Next to the Blue Door were the Wengert properties and these are still pretty much as they were then, but housed later tenants, such as Eloise Comtemporary Shop, a gallery and in the rear, Roberto's restaurant. The buildings all joined

together around a central courtyard still belonging to the Wengert heirs.

Ralph Meyers Curio Shop was next door. I remember him very fondly as he was always friendly and nice to me when I walked past his shop on my way to school each morning. He would be outside sweeping the front stoop to his store and had a smile and a friendly "good morning, young lady" for me. His shop later became Frenchy's restaurant and now is part of El Rincon and Rowena Meyer's Curio Store. There were moccasins, hand-made by Indians from the Pueblo. It remains El Rincon curio and jewelry store and is owned by Paco Martinez, Grandson of Rowena Meyers Martinez.

The next building is Cabot Plaza. The towers on the building were designed by Ralph Meyers. The building was built by Alvin Burch as a Ford Motor Company garage and was later sold to John Harper. When he built a new dealership on South Santa Fe Road (now Paseo del Pueblo Sur), the building was sold to Mrs. Mary Cabot. Mr. Cabot owned the El Crepusculo building and published the El Crepusculo paper.

enjoy

OLD KIT CARSON ROAD

an enchanting street in taos

Adobe Hacienda Motel

Adobe Wall Motel

Beimer Chevron Station

Blue Door Art Gallery

Bond Plumbing & Heating

Carl's Trading Post

Casa de Vidrio

East n' West Shop

El Monte Motel

Fiesta Motel

Foster's Cafe

Gallery "A"

Harper Motor Company

Howell Cleaners

Jerry's Men's Wear

Kit Carson Home & Museum

Litrell's Curio Shop

Mission Galleries

Northern Savings & Loan Assn.

Reynold's Art Gallery

San Geronimo Lodge

Sewell's Indian Arts

Taos Art Gallery

Taos Book Shop

Texaco Station

OLD KIT CARSON ROAD ASSOCIATION

# TCHS HISTORICAL RESEARCH GRANT

by David Maes

In accordance with the Taos County Historical Society (TCHS) mission of promoting the preservation of the history of Taos and encouraging the study and appreciation of the rich historical traditions of northern New Mexico, TCHS Board formed a committee to look into creating a research grant plan. The committee includes the following four TCHS members: Committee Chair Elizabeth Romero Hyndman, Paul Figueroa, Sylvia de la Torre-Spencer, and David Maes.

The TCHS Board approved offering a research grant award as a one-time pilot project. The grant will be offered to UNM graduate students working at the Master and Doctoral Ph.D levels of study involving research on northern New Mexico Pre-12th Century History. The committee members consulted with Dr. Manuel Griego y Garcia, UNM History Professor, during the initial discussion of the pilot project. Dr. Garcia y Griego's vast knowledge and experience of New Mexico historical issues proved a great asset to the committee's work.

The initial grant announcement was made known to the UNM History Department over the summer. The announcement outlines the details regarding the grant application process

including the Board's approved grant amount in the range of \$500. - \$2,000. dollars for the current 2022-23 academic schoolyear. Among the research topics of interest to the TCHS members listed, included the following: northern New Mexico architecture, agricultural issues related to farming, land grants and water rights, acequias, historical churches, local institutions such as *Penitentes*, notable historical figures, Native American culture and northern New Mexico Heritage language including *canciones*, *poemas*, *refranes dichos*, and musical *y bailes*. Other related topics are also welcomed for consideration.

This fall, interest in the grant project was expressed to the committee by a couple of graduate students, and the Board approved for the grant application initiative to be re-opened in the 2023 UNM spring semester. The students were invited to apply when the announcement is re-opened. Grant announcements will be disseminated to the UNM History Department, as well as, other related fields/departments involved in researching northern New Mexico historical subjects.

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## KIT CARSON ROAD (continued)

The Chevron Gas Station building was the last one on the south side of Kit Carson Road, going towards the Plaza. The property was owned by the Wengert family, and the building belonged to the Perovich family. There was a disagreement, and the Chevron station was torn down.

Continuing on the North Side of Kit Carson Road...

The next buildings were bought from Captain Spotts in 1946 by Dow G. Bond when he returned home after serving in World War II. Captain Spotts would sell Dow either side of the street. The south side was an open lot, and the north side had an old adobe building built in 1856 which was a residence and had two adobe fireplaces. Dow chose to buy on the north side for optimum sunlight in the winter months.

The building to the east was built in the 1950's and served as the Taos Post Office until the 1970's. It is now a gallery.

The 1856 house was converted into two retail spaces on the west, and Dow Bond Plumbing and Heating, Inc. on the east. During the war years, Bond Plumbing was located in the Tom Holder Building.

The next building on the North side of the street was the John McCarthy residence, where five children were reared, John (Jack), Tom, Charlie, and the twins Jimmy and Queenie. Mr. McCarthy owned several buildings on Taos Plaza.

The Howell building is next. It was Howell Cleaners and now it is retail shops and an art gallery, with an apartment upstairs. Cecil and Sally Howell lived in a residence in back.

Kit Carson's home is next, with separate retail stores built by the Masons in the 1950's. Kit Carson's house goes back to the eighteen hundreds. It still has the portal post which horses were tied up to.

The Liebert Building known for its raised boardwalk dates back to the eighteen hundreds. It is now a retail store.

The end building to the west was a restaurant. Dow Bond, when he came to Taos in the early 1930's, opened a restaurant there. It was called The Plaza Cafe. Clara, Mrs. Albert Martinez, from the Pueblo was one of the waitresses. Mrs. Letha Bistrum owned the restaurant next and called it the N K Cafe. Charlie Foster owned it next but, he was also the cook. Charlie was known to smoke cigars, and Charlie's customers wondered how many ashes ended up on the hamburgers. There were some hot card games in the basement, with some of the leading citizens participating.

Joe and Mary Sanchez owned this building next, remodeling it to accommodate their art gallery called Gallery A Fine Art. The building presently is a retail store.

On the corner was a Texaco gas station, which was run by Mr. John Cory. There were four gas stations on the four corners of Taos's central intersection at the Plaza. Mr. Louis Martinez operated the station as a Gulf gas station till the late nineteen hundreds. Mr. and Mrs. Dave Buck purchased it and remodeled it into a retail store, which is what it remains to this day.

Written by Sadie Ortiz Knight,  
completed by Benton Bond

# FROM TAOS TO WASHINGTON: B. C. HERNANDEZ (1862-1954)

by Virginia Dodier

*“... the first Hispanic from New Mexico to serve  
as a full Member of Congress.”*

## *Family and Early Life*

I never knew my mother's grandfather Benigno Cárdenas Hernández. He died aged 92 in 1954. I don't have access to his personal papers, if they still exist.

I heard stories from people, especially my mother and her father, who knew him very well. From them I got the impression BC was—like my mother—incredibly lovable, and like my grandfather, absolutely straight as an arrow. Here's what my grandfather—John Whitlock Hernandez—told me about his father, BC. Grandpapa said that BC was excommunicated by the Catholic Church three times: once when he married a Presbyterian preacher's daughter (and converted), once when he became a Mason (with a capital M), and once when he became a Republican. Oh, Grandpapa added, BC was never a Catholic in good standing because he was baptized by Padre Martinez.

My mother Jean—Mama—told me her version of BC's origins. She said that BC's father Juan José Hernández was a mason (small m) from Chihuahua who was recruited in Mexico by Bishop Lamy to work on churches in New Mexico, and that Juan José met and married his wife, Manuela Cárdenas, on the journey up. Manuela was from Spain, Mama said, and was coming to New Mexico with her brother, a priest, to act as his housekeeper.

I just have to take a breath here and mention that both my parents, Jean Hernández and Victor Dodier, came from families where folks from all over married other folks from somewhere else. Nuevomexicanos married Anglos, Catholics married Protestants, French Canadians married Mexicans, Virginians married Texans, and so on and on. Grandpapa simplified this. He told me, heard him use.

When I moved to Taos in 2018 I was immediately drawn to Nita Murphy and the Southwest Research Center, University of New Mexico-Taos. Nita was an important member of the Taos County Historical Society. She was an inspiration. She introduced me to her friends. I'm forever grateful to her memory, and I'm just one of the many, many people she helped. With Nita's guidance I started going through records of births, baptisms, marriages, and deaths. I checked what I'd gleaned from family stories against historical records. There are a few differences ...

Juan José Hernández was born in Chihuahua about 1823. I don't know when or why he left Mexico though it was probably after the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848 and definitely before 1855, the year he married Maria Manuela de los Reyes Cárdenas (who was born in Alcalde about 1841) at San Juan Pueblo. What about Mama's story? I checked Paul Horgan's *Lamy of Santa Fe* (1975). According to Horgan, the bishop's trip to and from Mexico in the early 1850s was undertaken with one companion, not an entourage. Lamy recruited priests for New Mexico from his home



Benigno Cárdenas Hernández (Library of Congress)

province in France, not from Spain, and Manuela did not have a brother who was a priest.

Juan José and Manuela arrived in Taos in the late 1850s. Juan José is listed variously in the Taos censuses from 1860 through 1885 as an adobe mason, a mason, and a brick mason. He was a skilled worker. Did he work on churches? Maybe. For Bishop Lamy? *¿Quién sabe?*

My search continued. On the wall of Nita Murphy's office was a copy of the "Map of Fernandez de Taos [with] Sites of Prominent Families & Historic Spots [in the] Years 1845-1875", hand drawn by Ralph Meyers in 1944. Meyers labeled a property on the east side of the road to Taos Pueblo as belonging to "Hernandez of Ojo Caliente ... presently Manby." This clue led me to the Arthur R. Manby Papers at the Chávez History Library, Santa Fe, where I found an 1899 deed confirming that Manby did not build his famous house in Taos from the ground up, as Frank Waters describes it in *To Possess the Land* (1973)—he bought it from a member of the Hernández family.

Did Juan José Hernández, the adobe mason, build the house at 133 Paseo del Pueblo Norte? I don't know, and I don't know that it's possible to date the original six-room structure, patio, well and stables (Meyers dates the property to 1825, before the arrival of the Hernández family). Manby added the rooms that are now the offices of the Taos Center for the Arts (which rents to Donabe, the restaurant that occupies the original six rooms), plus the shops between the house and Doc Martin's restaurant. I'm glad the TCA board took the initiative to rename the house the Hernández-Manby House to better convey its origins.



Now the scene is set for Benigno Cárdenas Hernández's own arrival in Taos. He was born February 13, 1862, a cold winter's night, according to Grandpapa, in a house next door to the church. To keep mother and child warm that night "they burned saints," Grandpapa said, with a double meaning in Spanish, giving BC a fairytale birth with an iconoclastic twist. It's a great story, but can it possibly be true? Baby Benigno, it turns out, was not baptized by Padre Martinez. According to church records, he was baptized by Father Gabriel Ussel, one of Bishop Lamy's French priests. BC was the fourth of his parents' 15 children and he was the last survivor.

I know nothing specific about BC's childhood. Brief newspaper biographies published during his lifetime state that he attended public and private schools in Taos, and the Colegio San Miguel in Santa Fe. BC appears in the 1870 Taos census living with his parents and siblings (unfortunately, street addresses are not given in the old censuses).

### **Business**

Like many young Taoseños it appears that BC left home to find work, and that he learned on the job. I found a "Bennie Hernandez" listed in 1880 census, living as a servant in the household of a merchant in Las Vegas, New Mexico. In the 1885 territorial census Bennie Hernandez appears living and working at the Ojo Caliente hot springs. BC's twin careers in business and politics began in Ojo. His mentor was his employer, Antonio Joseph, also a son of Taos. Joseph, a Democrat, was territorial delegate to the U.S. Congress from 1885 to 1895, when he was replaced by Thomas Catron, the boss of New Mexico Republican politics.

In 1887 BC married Hattie Martin, who was the cook at Ojo Caliente. She was a Mormon from Missouri, and they married at San Juan Nepomuceno Church in El Rito. Sadly, she died in childbirth in 1893. The child did not survive.

In the late 1880s and early 1890s New Mexico newspapers started noticing BC in their columns, recording his rise through the Republican Party ranks. BC paid his dues, giving speeches, serving on committees, running for office, attending conventions. At that time the GOP was the Party of Lincoln and the party of business. The party platform called for statehood, which was key to winning New Mexicans' votes. The party offered inducements and made promises to win folks over. Grandpapa told me in 1984 that he and his father went to meet the Republican bigwigs from Back East when they arrived in Albuquerque in 1912. He recalled to me that "they made all kinds of promises to our people. They never kept them, and they never will." Grandpapa was totally disillusioned after 70-plus years of fealty.

In 1898 BC married my great-grandmother, Frances Viola Whitlock—nicknamed Frankie. The *Santa Fe New Mexican* of April 9, 1898 reported that:

The marriage of Miss Frankie Viola Whitlock, of Taos, to Mr. B.C. Hernandez, one of the leading and best known citizens of northern New Mexico and a prosperous businessman, took place at the home of the bride's parents, Rev. and Mrs. J.M. Whitlock, at Taos. ... The bride was dressed in a magnificent white satin gown and looked very handsome. There were about 200 guests from

many sections of northern New Mexico present ... The newly married couple will make their home at Lumberton, in Rio Arriba county, where Mr. Hernandez is engaged in business.

By the late 1890s the Hernández family no longer lived in Taos. Ojo Caliente became their base, as Carlos was living there and was the supervisor at the hot springs. Juan José Hernández died in Taos in 1893 and his widow Manuela moved to Ojo afterwards. She died there in 1915.

BC and Frankie moved between Rio Arriba County towns, from Lumberton where Grandpapa was born in 1900, to Tierra Amarilla where BC partnered in a mercantile business with his brother-in-law Julian Amador, and Canjilon, where he raised sheep. In an interview with the *Albuquerque Journal-Democrat* (December 9, 1899) BC stated that:

sheep in northern Rio Arriba county are doing well, and ... generally speaking the ranges are good ... times are prosperous, and ... business is good; ... there is plenty of work for everybody who wants it and the people are satisfied.

Around 1985 my mother wrote me a letter in the form of a travelogue about places in New Mexico associated with her family. Regarding Canjilon she wrote that Grandpapa told her "that his happiest boyhood days were spent here where they brought the sheep to summer pasture. He said he thought he was king with any number of horses for him to ride."

### **Politics and Public Service**

After 1900, BC kept up his business interests and progressed in his political career, holding county offices in Rio Arriba. In 1912, New Mexico was granted statehood at last. BC was a delegate to the 1912 national Republican Party convention, and served as receiver in the U.S. land office in Santa Fe, from 1912-1914. In August 1914 the Republican Party nominated BC for New Mexico's sole Congressional seat. The *Albuquerque Morning Journal* reported on August 26, 1914 that after the nomination.

There followed the customary outbursts of convention enthusiasm, and the successful nominee for congress astonished the delegates, many of whom did not know him personally, with a really eloquent and sensible address in English. In fact it electrified the audience, and Hernandez received an ovation that expressed to some extent the enthusiasm of the convention in finding itself united on the ticket.

*La Revista de Taos* endorsed him on August 26, 1914, writing (translated from the Spanish), "In a word, Don Benigno is an honest, capable and intelligent man, as they say, 'a self-made man,' son of poor and humble parents, but among those of the noble and ancient type that teach their children the straight and honorable way that leads to a brilliant future and that honors their lineage."

This emphasis on honesty and honor defended BC against a yellow press campaign. The *Albuquerque Morning Journal* on September 13, 1914 roared that "while treasurer of [Rio Arriba] county he marked taxes paid that were not accounted for," including those of his own mother. The same paper said that



BC's nomination was racially motivated. The Progressive Party candidate, Francis C. Wilson, piled on, saying that BC's campaign message—which he delivered in person in every county in New Mexico—was based on his appeal to fellow Spanish-speaking New Mexicans. Against the odds BC beat the Democratic incumbent, Harvey Butler Fergusson, and won his first term in Congress.

I read some of BC's speeches in the *Congressional Record*. He answered questions from his colleagues, who recognized that he was an authority on subjects unfamiliar to them. I found an excellent summary of his congressional career online on the history.house.gov website. Here is a brief rundown, taken from the site:

- During the 64<sup>th</sup> Congress, 1915-1917 (his first term) he served on the Indian Affairs and Irrigation of Arid Lands committees
- He submitted bills that addressed constituents' needs and called for public works
- He denounced Pancho Villa's 1916 raid on Columbus, New Mexico, saying that "the people of New Mexico have a militia now, and undoubtedly will assist the national authorities in controlling and trying to apprehend the assassins who have committed these latest outrages."
- He favored a diplomatic solution over U.S. involvement in World War I

BC ran again in 1916 but lost to Democrat William Walton. However, Walton did not stand for the seat in 1918 and BC went back to the hustings. This time he highlighted his successes in Washington and his political experience. Previously he had been dovish on the U.S. getting involved in the war in Europe, but during his 1918 campaign (which took place after the U.S. entered the war) he "pledged that he would vote for all measures necessary to win the war." He even referred to his "only boy [my grandfather!] [who had] voluntarily enlisted and gone to the front." (Actually, the Armistice was declared shortly after Grandpapa enlisted.)

In the 66<sup>th</sup> Congress (1919-1921), BC served on the Indian Affairs, Irrigation of Arid Lands and Public Lands committees. He submitted bills for constituent relief, public works, and to support veterans. The history.house.gov site states that

One of Hernández's lasting legislative successes was the passage of H.R. 14669, a bill to consolidate forest lands in the Carson National Forest, near Taos ... whose enactment [as Public Law] (P.L. 66-382) authorized the Secretary of the Interior to exchange land with private landowners for the benefit of the national [forest].

BC represented the tribes and pueblos of New Mexico, and I believe that serving on the House Committee on Indian Affairs was his most important assignment. (This committee is now the Subcommittee for Indigenous Peoples of the United States, chaired by New Mexico Rep. Teresa Leger Fernandez.) In mid-1919 BC participated in what he termed a "junket" with other committee members, a 30-day train trip through the Southwest and out to California—what a contemporary politician would call a "listening tour." The purpose, according to the *Santa Fe New Mexican* on August 26, 1919, was to "Make Full Investigation of

Handling of Indian Problem by the Bureau [of Indian Affairs]." BC told the paper, "There is a very strong disposition amongst the committee toward devising ways and means by which a good many of these Indians can be released from the government supervision and control. The idea is to give them property; their money if they have any in the treasury of the United States; declare them full-fledged citizens ... They are asking for it. [I] feel that they are just as able of taking care of their own ... as anybody else, therefore why should they be kept as wards of the government?"

The Indian Citizenship Act passed in 1924. During BC's time in Congress, a small town north of Española called Chama got a post office but needed a new name (because there were already two other Chamas). The townspeople wanted the name changed to Alabam, because the chief landmark was a bar called "The Alabam." BC was a teetotaler and temperance supporter. He refused to name the town after a bar! He counter-proposed "Las Nutrias," because he loved those critters (otters). But that name was already taken. So he named the town after himself—Hernandez. Most people know it because of the 1941 Ansel Adams photograph, *Moonrise, Hernandez, New Mexico*.

BC did not stand for re-election in 1920. He was "boomed" for governor, but nothing came of it. Instead he was named head of the Internal Revenue Service for New Mexico by President Warren G. Harding in 1921. My grandfather was his deputy. Both BC and Grandpapa lost these political patronage jobs when FDR took office in 1933. My grandfather found another IRS position—a "good government job" (his advice to me after I got a degree in art history was "get yourself a good government job")—in Laredo, Texas.

BC, forcibly retired aged 70-plus, remained active in civic affairs. He joined the Albuquerque Council #34 of the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC). LULAC, founded in 1929, is the oldest civil rights organization for Latinos. In the early 1930s the organization grew quickly, spreading from Texas to New Mexico and beyond. BC became the special organizer for New Mexico and Arizona. (I didn't know about this, BC's third career, until I was a member of LULAC and met Dr. Cynthia Orozco, a LULAC historian who teaches at Eastern New Mexico University-Ruidoso.) This late-life commitment was totally in character for BC. As enumerated in 1930s issues of the *LULAC News*, LULACers held to a long list (25 in all) of aims and purposes, beginning with "To develop within the members of our race the best, purest and most perfect type of a true and loyal citizen of the United States of America," continuing through anti-discrimination and equal rights campaigns, "acquisition of the English language," loyalty to the United States, promoting educational opportunities for Latino children, and (I'm highlighting this) number 7, "We solemnly declare once for all to maintain a sincere and respectful reverence for our racial origin of which we are proud." The LULAC Code begins "Respect your citizenship and preserve it ..." The emphasis was on "Americanism."

Because he was a Grand Old Man of New Mexico, in 1938 BC was named to the board of commissioners of the Coronado

(continued on page 10)

# Election of Directors & Officers: Nomination Committee Report

## by David Maes

At the business meeting usually held at the beginning of each year, Board of Directors posts come up for renewal. This year, due to term limits and resignations, we will have five Board of Directors positions to fill. Two are officer positions - president and secretary. Three are board members at-large positions. They include:

- 1) The program committee chair position, currently held by Paul Figueroa;
- 2) the membership committee chair, currently held by Effie Romero;
- 3) the board position currently held by Bernadine DeHerrera.

Article V of our by-laws establishes a process for Election of Directors and Officers:

### Section 1.

The officers of Society will be a President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer. The Board of Directors shall consist of the officers and three to five elected Board members at large. The number of Board members at large will be determined by vote of the membership at the annual meeting.

### Section 2.

Officers and directors will be elected by the membership at the annual meeting. A slate of candidates for all positions will be prepared by the Nomination Committee and presented to the membership at the meeting. Additional candidates may be nominated at the meeting by any member in good standing.

### Section 3:

A separate vote will be taken for each position. If there is a single candidate for a position, that person will be considered elected if he/she receives an affirmative vote of a majority of the members in good standing at the meeting. If there is more than one candidate for a position, the candidate receiving the most votes from members in good standing will be elected."

(continued from page 9)

Cuarto Centennial, which was headed by James Zimmerman, president of the University of New Mexico. Officially, the CCC's purpose was to commemorate the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1540 entrada of Francisco Vasquez de Coronado. There were to be 18 different but unified pageants around New Mexico as part of the celebration, including a Coronado exhibit (now the Coronado Historic Site) near Bernalillo. BC wrote a letter to the editor of *LULAC News* in late 1938, stating that President Zimmerman "told us that we were going to have a SHOW ... this SHOW means business for the whole state."

### Legacy

While resting, make adobes ... and a family. BC and Frankie had three children, eight grandchildren, and I can't count how many great-grandchildren. We are all Americans, speak English (and some Spanish), are well-educated, proud of our identity and ancestry, and respectful of our elders. Oh, one thing—most of us aren't Republicans anymore ...

I have served on the Nomination Committee for the past five years. I have served as chair for the past two years. During this period, I do not recall an instance when there has been a "competitive" race for any officer or board member at-large position. There have been just a few "write-in" ballots cast in every election - perhaps fewer than 5 for any given position. In reality, the nomination committee members usually have to "recruit" for officers and prospective board members. Yes, we reach out and encourage folks to consider serving as board members. This reality is the basis for the process as described in Section 2 (above) of the by-laws. Having the nomination committee "screen" for prospective board members, then present these members to the HS member body at the annual business has proven to be the most fair, equitable, and efficient method of selecting new board members.

Within the workings of the nomination committee, applicant qualities that are considered in making selections are:

- 1) demonstrated interest in HS activities - like attendance and participation at monthly meetings;
- 2) volunteering for committee assignments and demonstrated work in those assignments; and
- 3) length of membership, including current with dues.

Should any member feel the calling to serve as an officer or board member at large, now would be a good time to come forward and state that intention. I encourage anyone that feels the calling to serve and promote the goals of the TCHS to step forward and assist in continuing the Society's mission to educate our community and preserve our rich history.

To place your name in consideration for an officer or board member position, or to discuss the duties and responsibilities involved with serving on the Board, contact Ernestina Cordova or myself. Contact email information: David Maes: [dmmaes1@yahoo.com](mailto:dmmaes1@yahoo.com). Ernestina Cordova: [cordova@taosnet.com](mailto:cordova@taosnet.com).

### *Public Service Career of B.C. Hernández:*

1900-1904: Probate Clerk and ex officio recorder of deeds for Rio Arriba County  
1904-1906: Sheriff of Rio Arriba County  
1908-1912: Rio Arriba County Treasurer and ex officio collector of taxes  
1912-1913: receiver of the Land Office at Santa Fe  
1912 and 1916: delegate to the Republican National Conventions  
1917-1918: member of the State exemption board  
1914: elected to the Sixty-fourth Congress (March 4, 1915-March 3, 1917)  
1918: elected to the Sixty-sixth Congress (March 4, 1919-March 3, 1921)  
1921-1933: Collector of Internal Revenue for New Mexico  
1940-1947: member of the Selective Service Board

*This article is the text of a presentation to the Taos County Historical Society by his great-granddaughter, Virginia Dodier, August 6, 2022*



# FAVORITE DESTINATIONS

by Dave Cordova

I have a few observations, culled from years of experience as a resident of Taos County.

I have learned that visitors to Taos have very varied and specific reasons for gracing our Town and will make the pilgrimage with some frequency. The Taos Valley has been hosting visitors for centuries, beginning with the attendance of the Taos Pueblo Trade Fairs in the 12<sup>th</sup> century. (Later, adventurers looking to make a living of the resources found along rivers and in the mountains of northern New Mexico.) Later still, adventurous families traveled on the Santa Fe Trail, making their way to the Taos Valley to help open up the New Mexico Territory.

Since the turn of the 20th century, a different group of people began their pilgrimage to Taos. These people were artistic, creative folk, who discovered the quality of light that gave their art life. Over the years, many different creative types have come to Taos to write, compose, paint, draw and build: Georgia O'keeffe, Society of Artists, D.H. Lawrence, Michael Martin Murphey, Dennis Hopper, Dean Stockwell & Julia Roberts.



Some came to commune with nature. Taos was named the Hippie Capital of the Southwest by Time/Life Magazine and inhabited communes such as New Buffalo and Morning Star north of Taos. Remnants of those communes stayed on to become an integral part of the Taos Community and contribute in many ways.

Of course, Ernie & Rhoda Blake were responsible for bringing hoards of skiers and outdoor enthusiasts to the Cabresto Canyon since the mid-50s, with the establishment of the Alpine quality Taos Ski Valley. The Rio Grande became a much sought after river rafting course and the National Parks Service with assistance from groups, such as the Rocky Mountain Youth Corp have created quality trails for every physical level.

Taos has been a destination for seekers of history and culture. I have found that the Taos Pueblo is the number one destination for culture, having a deep interest in the people of Taos Pueblo and the centuries-old apartment building. The second most popular historical attraction is the Kit Carson House/Museum. A 19th-century adobe house, where Kit and Josefa Carson lived and raised their children. Other popular attractions include the Church of San Francisco de Asis in Ranchos de Taos, the Rio Grand Gorge Bridge, the Martinez Hacienda and Taos Plaza, where the U.S. Flag flies 24/7 by an Act of Congress.

## Eloy Antonio Jeantete

April 6, 1928

November 6, 2022



Former Town of Taos Mayor Eloy Jeantete has gone on to join his beloved wife, Mary; may they rest in peace together. The Honorable Mayor Jeantete served the Taos community as Town Councilman, Mayor and as banker with First State Bank of Taos. He served numerous boards and committees, including Taos Feeds Taos and the Taos County Historical Society.

He will be remembered for his service.

I learned that Taos has been very popular for families getting together for a week or two in a quaint Taos Adobe. These folks get together for weddings, anniversaries, and family reunions. I have personally attended and participated in many weddings. Some weddings were very formal affairs, but the greatest number were those that brought a groom and bride from out of town and I arranged for a minister or judge to perform the marriage. My wife and I served as witnesses for several of those weddings.

Taos continues to be a popular tour destination. Several tour groups will visit Taos throughout the year, and several others are drawn to musical and cultural events such as Michael Hearne's Barn Dance, Michael Martin Murphey's Chuck Wagon Concerts in Red River, and for many years, the KTAO Solar Fest and Taos School of Music. Let's not forget that the three most popular annual events are the Fiestas of Santiago y Santana in late July, the Taos Pueblo Pow Wow, also in July, and the Taos Mountain Balloon Rally in late October.



Taosños are very welcoming, which contributes to many return visits and the referrals to family and friends. I see the disappointment when the visitor discovers that a favorite locale is no longer there. They come looking for friends or friendly shop owners or places that stirred their interests.

Whatever the reason, Taos will continue to host visitors for many years to come.

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

February 4 - 2:00 PM - Annual Meeting  
"Growing Up In Taos"  
Carmen Martinez Lieurance

March 4 - 2 PM  
"History of Harwood Museum of Art 1923-2023"  
Juniper Leherissey, Executive Director

April 1 - 2 PM  
"Witches of Abiquiu"  
Rick Hendricks, Historical Society of NM

May 7 - 12 Noon  
HONOREE LUNCH

June 3 - 2 PM  
"Victorio Peak: 100 tones of Gold"  
(or 100 Tall Tales)  
Rob Martinez (HSNM)

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 Board of Directors

President: Ernestina Cordova  
Vice-president: Elizabeth Romero  
Secretary: Judy Weinrobe  
Treasurer: Stephanie Levy

### *Board Members*

Bernadine DeHerrera • Paul Figueroa

David Maes • Effie Romero

### *Programs*

Paul Figueroa  
*Local History & Folklore*  
David Maes

### *Membership*

Effie Romero  
*Preservation*

### *Publications/Website*

Dave Cordova

## BECOME A MEMBER

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

### Membership categories:

Individual .....	\$30
Family .....	\$50
Sustaining .....	\$100
Business .....	\$60

To become a member sign up on our website:  
<http://taoscountyhistoricalsociety.org/members.html>  
or send a check, along with your name and address, to:

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

For more information call (575) 770-0681  
or e-mail: [cordova@taosnet.com](mailto:cordova@taosnet.com)



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.