

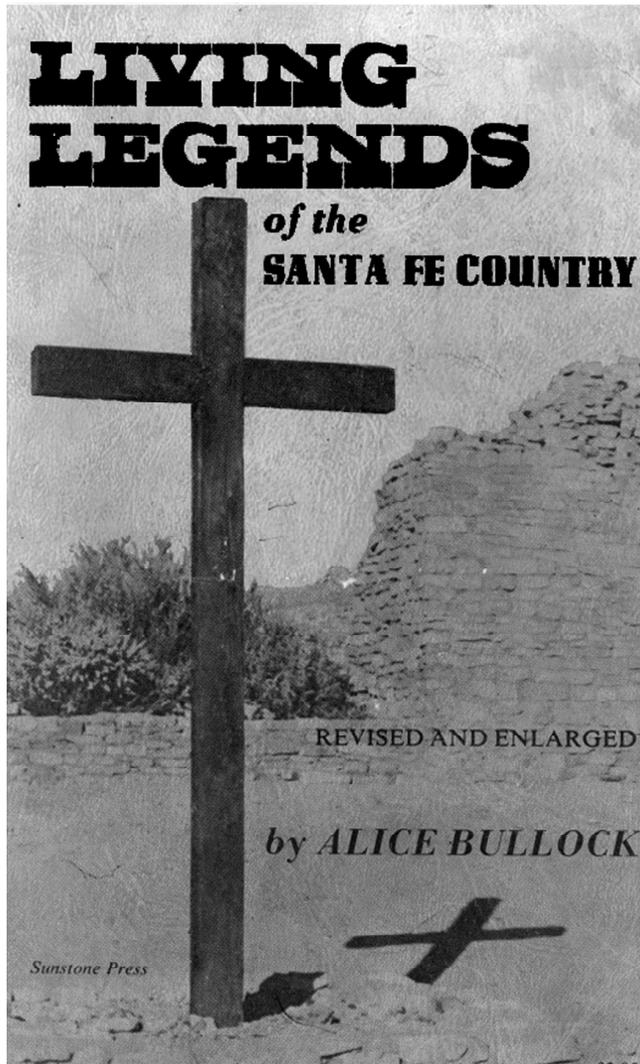
AYER Y HOY en TAOS

Yesterday and Today in Taos County and Northern New Mexico

Summer 2024

Issue #56

“Taos-The Sacred Valley” and “Ranchos de Taos Mystery” From the Book



The History of the Archives & Library of the Society

by Paul C. Figueroa

“CARSON COLCHA” A GRAVES FAMILY LEGACY



by Lisa Graves-Cordova

2024 TCHS HONOREES



THE TAOS NEWS

by Larry Torres

A publication of the Taos County Historical Society

CONTENTS

Carson Colcha-A Graves Family Legacy	3
by Lisa Graves-Cordova	
“Living Legends of Santa Fe Country”	
“Taos - The Sacred Valley”	6
“Ranchos de Taos Mystery”	8
by Alice Bullock	
The History of the Archives & Library of the Society	10
by Paul C. Figueuroa	
TCHS Honoree: The Taos News	II

AYER Y HOY en TAOS

Yesterday and Today in Taos County
and Northern New Mexico

Summer 2024

Issue No. 56

ISSN 1088-5285

© 2024 Taos County Historical Society

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.

All articles, maps, photographs, drawings, etc., are the property of the contributors and may not be used or reproduced in any way without permission from the Society and/or the contributor.

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

Ernestina Cordova - President

David Maes - Vice-president

Judy Weinrobe - Secretary

Ron Stoner - Treasurer

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

A Message from the TCHS President Ernestina Cordova

The Taos County Historical Society's goal is to preserve our history and, along the way, to learn and appreciate our history. The way we address our future is critical in how we preserve our past. The TCHS will always preserve our history to ensure that our organization continues to train our citizens to assume leadership roles in the future. We are often reminded of the importance of History and the people and events that make us what we are today.



The Society started 2024 with a retreat for the TCHS board members to discuss our current status and upcoming events of our organization. In February, we held our annual meeting for the election of Officers and Board Members. The voting was followed by a panel discussion of three “Taoseños” comprised of Louise Gallegos, Telesfor Gonzales and John Miera. Moderated by Carmen Lieurance, these Taoseños gave anecdotal stories about their “Growing up in Taos”. In March we hosted historian David Caffey who introduced his new book, “When Cimmaron Meant Wild” and spoke New Mexico’s wildest period. In April Dr. Deborrah Ragland lectured on, “Geology 101”, which gave the audience some insight into the many geological areas in our state, especially in northern New Mexico. Our Honoree Luncheon, honored The Taos News and its historical contributions, with guest speaker, Martin Jagers speaking on his role as President of the Kit Carson House, Inc. and his work with “Historic Preservation in Taos”, which includes the historical home of Kit and Josefa Carson.

Our TCHS membership has grown, and I want to acknowledge the work our board and committees have done to ensure that growth. Our historical lectures continue to be at capacity, and we have outgrown our meeting room. We continue to wait for the restoration of the Old County Court House. Hopefully it will be completed by 2025 and we will be back in there.

“Organizational History” enriches our experiences and understanding of our current place in the world. We are proud to help with the publication of our Ayer y Hoy newsletter that continues with remarkable stories of our past and historical events.

*I join our Board and Committees to wish you the best!
Let's enjoy the summer of 2024.*

Sincerely,

*Ernestina Cordova, President
Taos County Historical Society*

“CARSON COLCHA - A GRAVES FAMILY LEGACY”

by Lisa Graves-Cordova



Sophie Graves
with granddaughter Lisa

It's no surprise that the colcha embroidery stitch is from Spanish and Moorish history, dating back to the late 1600's, but I was surprised to read that the stitch was likely copied from Chinese silk embroidery imported into Old Mexico. When I researched the similarities, one thing that stood out was the same way that the Chinese embroidered art cloths used

individual images scattered across the cloth rather than presenting a single image. Sometimes the images were repeated, sometimes not – just like many colchas we've seen through the years here in New Mexico.

There are many theories about how colcha made its way to New Mexico. Apparently, the oldest piece known in New Mexico is from the 1700's. One theory, as to why no one is sure whether any other colchas pre-date this, is that any existing pieces would have been destroyed during the Pueblo Revolt of 1680. Fast-forward to the 1800's when the market for New Mexican textiles flourished in 1821 with Mexican Independence and the opening of the Santa Fe Trail. With the arrival of the railroad in the 1880's, interest grew in cheaper commercial trade goods, competing for the local market. New Mexican crafts became collectable art, and colchas were part of that thriving trade business.

The colcha embroidery stitch is a long stitch, with “couching” stitches either straight across the original long stitch or at a 45-degree angle. Often, colcha artists change the cross-over stitch within their designs to create a more interesting pattern and texture of the overall piece. The stitch is also referred to as Bokhara stitch, dating back to Turkistan in the 8th century. In New Mexico, the stitch was once part of a young girl's education, like tortilla-making and sewing. Making beautiful things for their homes and gifts to their village churches were part of their culture.



Purple Irises by Lisa Graves

Locally, the Millicent Rogers Museum has a wonderful collection of colchas made by various members of the Graves family, including Frances, Sophie, and their brother-in-law, Wayne Graves. The museum has captured and maintained an era of colcha by the Graves family, who defined The Carson Colcha from the early 1900's. According to a program from a show from December of 2000 called A Stitch in Time, The Carson Colcha

revival was spearheaded by weaver Frances Varos Graves and blanket trader Elmer Shupe, whose family founded Carson New Mexico. He was a local entrepreneur who bought and sold southwestern art and artifacts. Frances and my grandmother, Sophie, were sisters, married to two Graves brothers. Sophie was



Lisa, Elaine, Louise & Tony Graves
in front of Frances Graves' colchas.

married to Frank and Frances was married to Claude. Frank and Claude's sister, Winnie, was married to Elmer Shupe. My father, Tony, is the son of Sophie and Frank, married to my mother, Louise. Joe Graves, a well-known cowboy, artist and water dowser, was the son of Claude and Francis. Wayne, the youngest of the Graves brothers, died at an early age without a family of his own.

According to an Art Notes article in the Taos News in November 1962, an article by Mildred Tolbert Crews in the Christmas issue of the New Mexico magazine is referenced, describing colcha as “a highly prized product from the Spanish Colonial period.” She also wrote that “the definition of colcha has evolved to mean the small, embroidered altar cloth and pillow tops, as well as the bed or couch spread. Colcha also means the type of embroidery stitch which is similar to crewel work. Colchas were done in solid, all-over pattern, often employing flower and leaf designs directly traceable to Spain (by way of Persia and China), and later symbols of the new world: buffalos, wagon trains, roosters, deer, Penitente marches, and always Saints.”

She went on to say that the colcha was worked with hand-spun and vegetable-dyed wool yarns on sabinilla, which is a soft white homespun wool. She quotes my grandmother, Sophie Graves, as saying that that type of sabinilla is impossible to make now, because the wool is coarsened and darkened by the practice of dipping the sheep. She said that, at that time, old colchas were no longer functional, and were enjoyed as wall hangings in home décor and museum acquisitions.

In 1964, Rebecca Salsbury James, a Taos artist who was known for her reverse oil-on-glass paintings and colcha embroidery, wrote an article titled “Paintings in Yarn” about colcha embroidery in the April 1964 edition of Woman's Day magazine.

In a letter to Jane Hiatt in December 1963, Rebecca was excited to write that a picture of Mrs. Hiatt's tea cloth, apparently made by Rebecca, would be printed in this article, mentioning that the magazine's "circulation is 9,500,000!!!" When I found this letter in my mom's "colcha file" I was amused that the envelope from Rebecca was simply addressed to "Jane Hiatt, Taos." And her return address was simply "Bx 562." No zip code or box number for Mrs. Hiatt!

As part of their current colcha exhibit, the Millicent Rogers Museum has an "Embroidery Flower Design for Dorothy," by Rebecca Salsbury James, circa 1900-1960, which I'm assuming was for Dorothy Brett, whom she befriended, along with Frieda Lawrence.

All of this was literally a lifetime ago since I was born in April of 1964. Since then, I grew up watching my mom, Louise, who learned colcha stitching from my Grandma Sophie, design and create colchas that she sold and gave away. She also created pillow-size colchas, stuffed the pillows and sold them. Even back then, she preferred her pieces to have lots of flowers and birds.

When I visited my grandmother, she always worked at a big wooden table with thousands of nail holes where she stretched out the Navajo rugs and blankets that she was mending. She always had a big box next to the table full of colorful pieces of yarn that she used in her mending and in her colchas. She seemed to always have a colcha in the works.

Both my mom and grandmother collected files of templates that they traced when "marking up" a design onto the cloth they chose to use. This included birds, flowers and various repetitive designs used to create borders. As I recall, these were common themes during that time, but my Mom's designs over the past several years have evolved into much more colorful, bold images similar to her watercolor paintings. My mom has used monks cloth for her designs and remembers that my grandmother did the same. When asked about yarn, my mom said both she and my grandmother used both wool and acrylic yarn depending on what they needed and what was available at the time, which is what she still does today.



Colcha by Louise Graves

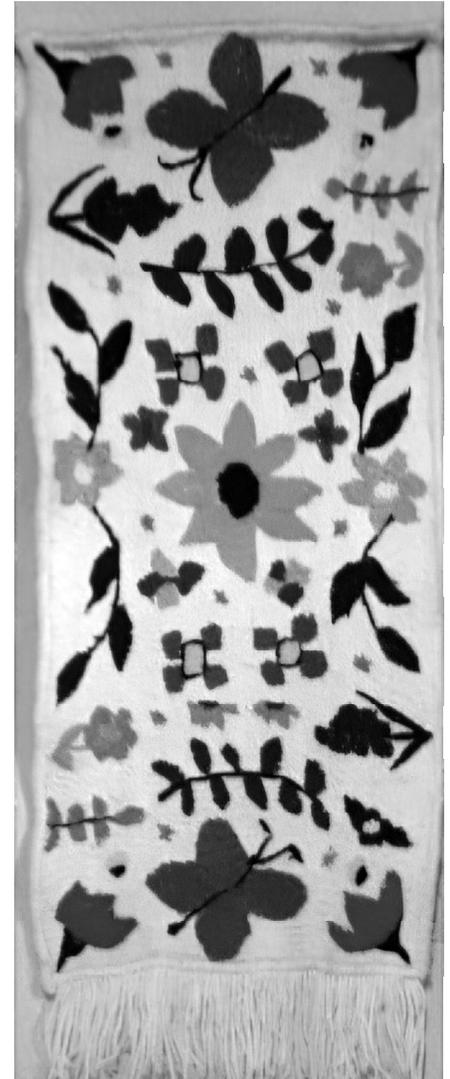
When my mom first started making colchas, my grandmother had a market through her art connections in Taos and Santa Fe, for selling their pieces. More recently, my mom has participated in many shows including several at the Martinez Hacienda that feature colcha embroidery. With Grandma Sophie as her teacher and mother-in-law, as well as her own notoriety as a watercolor

artist, she's been interviewed for several books and articles through the years to talk about her connection to the Carson Colcha and to share how her work has maintained its historical integrity within her contemporary colcha designs.

Today, my mom continues to create big splashes of color in her flowery colchas. The bright beautiful flowers against the stark white background are always stunning. She taught me and my sister, Elaine, who also spends many hours in the winter designing and stitching pieces to show at any of the local colcha exhibits. My mom's pieces epitomize the progression we've seen through the years from the old-fashioned designs and muted colors to the bright vibrant designs.

My sister, Elaine, will hang her colcha work at the Wilder Nightingale Fine Art gallery in Taos this summer. Owner Rob Nightingale describes Elaine as "the new generation of colcha and we need to recognize that 'Colcha' is a fine art in itself."

My dad also has many memories about growing up with colcha and all the other artistic endeavors within the family. Apparently, my grandmother's big wooden table with the nail holes goes back to his childhood, too. When Grandma Sophie finished a pile of blankets and rugs, she ironed them and folded them very carefully. He says he can still smell the distinct smell of the moist wool of the freshly ironed blankets or rugs in the truck as they came to town to either deliver the blankets and rugs or to put them in the mail to her customers in far-away places. As far as colcha memories, he says that when he and his brother and sister were kids, they helped fill in the background of many of the larger pieces that my grandmother was working on. The Graves seemed to prefer complete coverage of the ground fabric of each of their pieces, which was the way they were finished back in the early days. The religious cloths of the early 1900's when the Graves began their work did not usually have a background, but it was one of the characteristics of the Carson Colchas. Frances said that everyone in Carson made colchas - men, too. In fact, the Millicent Rogers Museum currently has two pieces in their current colcha show by Verde & Elmer Shupe.



Colcha by Elaine Graves

According to Frances's bio, she and her family saw their first colcha in Carson when someone brought them an old colcha [blanket] in Ojo Caliente. "It was pieced together in something like a double wedding ring pattern. Part of it needed mending, so we tore it apart and copied the stitch. We kept on practicing until we got it right."

In an article by Suzanne P. MacAulay titled "A Tale of Two Sisters: Invisibility, Marginalization and Renown in a 20th Century Textile Arts Revitalization Movement in New Mexico, Ms. MacAulay wrote: "In the beginning Frances and Sophie's early work celebrated romantic visions of the West. Ultimately, they each chose to reproduce non-anachronistic compositions of sparse embroidery fields populated by images of local fauna and flora or, as in Sophie's case, abstract designs. Sophie has an eye for color and pattern. Her skills at dyeing to achieve unusually striking color combinations were perfected over many years of repairing rugs and matching yarns."

Although both sisters contributed to the eventual stylistic trademark of Carson Colchas, and each of them had their individual characteristics, their work was often indistinguishable from each other's. Frances liked the Western themes and Sophie liked the singular elements of buffalo, Indians, wagons, and the local plants from their day-to-day lives. Some of their colchas seemed to be influenced by the designs of the Rio Grande weavings the family bought and sold. And since religious themes were important early on, both Frances and Sophie designed their colchas to include images from retablos and of Catholic saints.

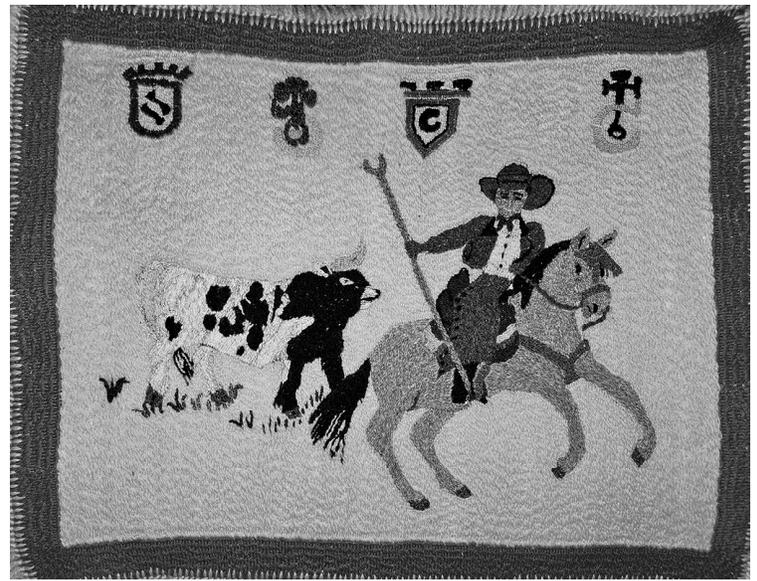
Although Grandma Sophie worked with colcha all her life and was very well-known in the art world through her work with Jane Hiatt at her gallery, she didn't receive the attention for her colchas from collectors and curators that Frances did. She did continue to create and sell her pieces through the people she met at Mrs. Hiatt's gallery although many people thought she was no longer making them.

Frances was awarded a National Endowment for the Arts National Heritage Fellowship in 1994. She held stitching workshops and became very visible to gallery owners and museum curators.

Sophie and Frances's niece, Maria Fernandez Graves, who learned colcha from Frances, has made a name for herself in the colcha world. When she was about 8 or 9 years old, her Aunt Frances wanted her to join in the family business of mending blankets and rugs, but she just wasn't interested. She was, however, taken by a particular colcha with a bird that Frances had laid out. She told Aunt Frances that she "wanted to learn how to make the colchas." So, she did; she finished that particular colcha, and Aunt Frances took it to a mercantile in Ojo Caliente where she "got paid for part of it and traded the rest for merchandise they needed, like coffee."



Colcha by Frances Varos Graves



Colcha by Maria Fernandez Graves
Designed by Artist Valerie Graves

Maria left colcha and came back to it a few times. In the late 1990's, artist Valerie Graves, who had been married to Joe Graves, encouraged Maria to keep making her colchas. She arranged for Maria to have an interview with the Santa Fe Spanish Market; she was accepted, and she displayed and sold her colchas for several years from a booth across from the Palace of the Governors. Valerie drew some of the images that Maria still uses, like horses and birds.

When asked what her favorite subjects are, Maria says she loves anything with color, particularly birds and flowers. She has incorporated very detailed images of red cardinals and blue birds into her designs and prefers to fill in the background of her pieces.

Toward the end of Maria's time at the Santa Fe Spanish Market, the Board required that all pieces be 100% wool yarn on wool cloth. Since she left the Market, she uses monks cloth and incorporates wool and acrylic yarn like Louise does.

While visiting Maria for this interview, I was excited to see a piece I'd never seen before of a large colcha she completed with my Aunt Bonnie, who was my dad's sister. Maria said Bonnie marked the design and Maria stitched it. The piece was eventually sold and fortunately, she had a picture of it. Bonnie also made several colchas through the years and helped my grandmother with her ever-growing blanket/rug-mending business.



Parrots by
Maria Fernandez Graves

It's amazing how we all grow up with the special people around us and the intricacies of their lives, not realizing just how unique they are. It never occurred to me that the background of my life, especially while I was growing up, would make me part of a legacy. I'm so fortunate to have my family today to help share in this legacy and hope to contribute to it for another generation!



From the Book: “Living Legends of the Santa Fe Country” by Alice Bullock

A good friend and colleague of Alice’s wrote, “So completely and voraciously does she attack everything in life that interests her, virtually every hobby has become a profession for Alice Bullock. To describe her and the energies she generates is to search the Thesaurus for more and more exotic words, none of them ever very sufficient. As the end of it all, you simply have to say, Alice Bullock is an energy force all her own.”

She came to New Mexico at the age of eight in 1912, the year of New Mexico’s statehood, and since then the new state and the new resident have developed, changed, learned and produced together. Spending her early days in the coal camps of northeastern New Mexico, Alice became a teacher, moving from community to community to teach in one-room schoolhouses. She was the first and only teacher in the Elizabethtown school with about six students.

When the Depression forced her out of the classroom, she and husband Dale Bullock bought the *Reporter*, a small weekly newspaper in Raton, and Alice was launched on a long, although interrupted, newspaper career. Alice contributed feature articles to *The Santa Fe New Mexican* and was that newspaper’s book review editor for several years.

Alice became a freelance writer, then wrote a novel based on life in the coal camps. Later, she began writing newspaper features, developed an interest in photography so she could illustrate her own stories and finally wrote a book on legends of New Mexico. “Living Legends of the Santa Fe Country” was published in 1972. The two pieces that follow are taken from this book and are based in Taos County. “Living Legends of the Santa Fe Country” by Alice Bullock is available from Amazon.com & other sources.

Taos - The Sacred Valley

Taos (rhymes with ‘house’) is sometimes said to contain the oldest continuously occupied apartment houses in America. The Taos of modern times is really two villages, the Spanish village Don Fernando de Taos and the Pueblo of Taos. It is, despite the rich history of the village, the Pueblo that draws visitors from all over the world. The natural beauty of the entire valley, the Sacred Valley, presided over by brooding Taos Mountain, is no deterrent however!

There are two dominant legends besides the emergence myth about the founding of the Pueblo. The first legend says that the people were wandering in search of a home site. The caciques had told them they would know when they had found the place the Gods favored; they would find an eagle feather at the side of a stream. When they wearily trudged into Taos Valley, there was the stream laughing its way over stones and through lush grasses, bordered by thickets of plum bushes. There, too, was the eagle feather — but across the stream was still another feather — hence pueblos were built on both sides.

A friendly rivalry between the two pueblos grew up, with the selection of the ruling chief for both pueblos being ascertained by races, climbing of the pole, and other contests as decreed by the Gods through the medicine men. Today the outward sign of governorship is in the cane given the pueblo by Abraham Lincoln while he was president. These canes (given to all the major pueblos) have become precious relics wherever they are, and pass from one governor to the next as a mark of office.

The second and lesser known legend of the founding of Taos also accounts for the wearing of separated legs of trousers by Taos Indian men. The men wear plain or plaid cotton blankets - sometimes over their heads and falling in graceful lines to their

knees; at other times the blanket is wrapped around the hips, with the ends tucked in as a turban is wrapped and secured.

In the second legend, the Taos Indians climbed a rainbow that dipped down sharply, ending in Taos Valley. Climbing it was slow, hard work, but once the apex had been reached, descending was so fast it wore out the seat of their pants! The male traditionalist at Taos today always wears his blanket in one approved way or another, though many of the young ones wear ordinary clothing at work, at school, and in Taos village.

Taos Pueblo, with its four and five storied terraced apartments was first visited by Europeans in August of 1541. Capt. Hernandez de Alvarado and a small detachment of soldiers from Coronado’s expedition journeyed north up the Rio Grande to visit this large (now the largest) Indian pueblo. There are ruins of some ninety pueblos scattered through Taos Valley, indicating early populations, but just how large the present Pueblo was then is a bit uncertain. Early Spanish figures consistently tend to be a bit exaggerated.



Just as consistently, as Spaniards continued to make group forays into the northern outpost of Mexico that we now call New Mexico, each dubbed the pueblos with a different name or version of the Indian name. Taos, however, seems to run pretty consistently with the name it now bears, though the origin is

uncertain. Some there are who favor the theory that, coming from North China or Manchuria in their intercontinental migration, they brought with them a lingering memory of Laotze and his doctrine of Taoism. Others believe the Spaniard gave them the name Taos because the warriors carried shields marked with a red cross like the Greek letter Tau. Or could it have been based in the Taos Indian language? Their word for "Thank you" is "tao" and certainly the Spanish had much to thank these Indians.

In 1598, 22 years before the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth Rock, a Spanish missionary, Padre de Zamora, was in residence at the pueblo, teaching the Indians the tenets of the Christian religion. Friar Pedro de Miranda went to Taos in 1613 and found a church (the mission of San Geronimo) already under construction.

The village of Taos, a walled town, was built around the present plaza in 1615. The Spaniard, with his superior armaments, could be of real help in repelling nomadic Comanche invaders that were a constant menace, particularly at harvest time.

In 1680, when the great Indian rebellion came, Taos Indians not only joined whole heartedly in killing or driving out the Spaniard, they were ringleaders. De Vargas and his men reconquered New Mexico in 1692, but Taos continued to hold out four more years.

De Vargas and his troops went north in September of 1696 to claim the allegiance of Taos for the King of Spain. The Indians fled to the mountains, and it was the heavy snows there that forced them down into the valley and the waiting De Vargas.

Friendly relations being restored, the partially-ruined church was rebuilt, and during the next century the Spaniards built their haciendas up and down the valley. With vassals and Indian slaves they dug acequias (irrigation ditches) and crops were abundant. Flocks of sheep were grazed on the mountain slopes, and the population was almost self sustaining.

With wool for weaving, hides of deer, elk and antelope to tan for leather, and plenty of food they had a surplus for trade. The caravans from Chihuahua bringing sugar, coffee, silks and linens for sale and trade were eagerly welcomed, and Taos became a trade center for the entire area, eventually extending as far as the Missouri.

French trappers and plains Indians learned of the Taos Fairs and the trade fair became an annual affair not to be missed. In 1805 the first Anglos - trappers and traders - were delighted to find such a haven as Taos provided, and it became very popular with the mountain men. Kit Carson (his home is a visitor's must in the village now) was one of these. Carson eventually made Taos his home. Albert Pike, Dick Wootton, Gov. Charles Bent, Padre Jose Antonio Martinez, Ceran St. Yrain, Judge Beaubien, other

illustrious names from our history books knew Taos or made it their home base.

Padre Martinez - thought by many to be one of the most intelligent men of this period, not only ministered to the spiritual needs of the people, but published *El Crepusculo* the first newspaper west of the Mississippi in 1835. He organized the first school in the area, and was a civic and political leader as well. When Bishop Lamy came to Santa Fe, Padre Martinez did not always see eye to eye with this new French dignitary and eventually was excommunicated - in 1856. Mementos of this colorful Padre are on display in the Kit Carson Museum in Taos. He continued with his school and church until his death.

Charles Bent, one of the founders of Bent's Fort in Colorado was murdered in his home in Taos during the defiance of Mexican occupation forces, and his home, too, is a visitor's must. It was at this time (1847) that the old church at Taos Pueblo was destroyed by shells of Col. Price's cannon when the rebels took refuge there.

One of the very few places where the United States flag may be flown day AND night is in Taos plaza. In 1861 there were numerous Confederate sympathizers in Taos, and several times these people had hauled down the Union standard and hoisted the Confederate flag. Capt. Smith Simpson, Kit Carson, Col. St. Vrain and Lt. Todd nailed the stars and stripes to a tall cottonwood pole, erected it in the plaza, then retired to St. Vrain's store on the

south side of the plaza, which point they stood guard. The flag has waved there, day and night, since that time.

In 1889 two artists, Bert Phillips and Ernest Blumenshien, came over Taos Pass in a wagon. The rugged terrain resulted in a broken wagon wheel, and by the time it was repaired they were so enamoured with the beauty of the region and the Taos Indians that they never went on. They were the founders

of the now internationally famous artists colony, for other artists, seeing their canvases, soon joined them and many stayed to win their own fame here in the shadow of the Sacred Mountain. They still come, for the beauty is still there. Whole books have been written about Taos and the story is not yet complete.

Paved roads now make the trip to Taos an easy and pleasant one, but wild iris still color the pastures with the blue of the sky, and clouds of plum blossom drift along the fences in the spring. When autumn comes, aspen, evergreen and low-growing scrub oak vie in greens, golds and deep reds for a beauty that not even the best of artists can capture.

Fiestas, Indian dances, processions preserve the fine traditions that supplement the visual delight that is the "Sacred Valley" - Taos Valley.

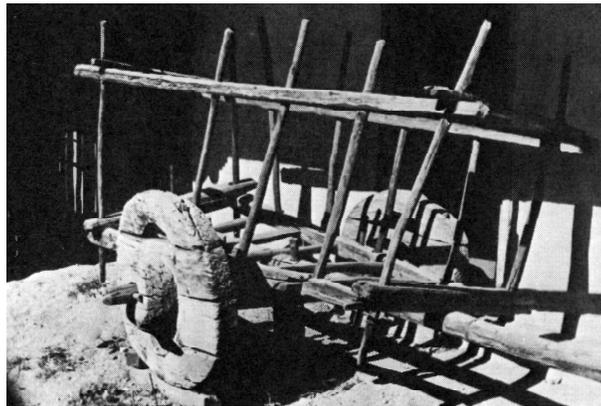


Photo credits: Alice Bullock by Bob Dimery; Taos Pueblo by The New Mexico Tourist Bureau; Wooden Cart by Alice Bullock.

Ranchos de Taos Mystery

A metal pole at the side of Highway 64 four miles south of Taos holds a black lettered white sign saying simply "Ranchos de Taos." Such an unimaginative sign might announce Podunk, Indiana or Coffeyville, Kansas - but there would not follow the delight of seeing the quaint little adobe village that is Ranchos.



Speed limit signs are equally prosaic but only a barbarian or a resident needs them. The paved highway (the only paving in the village) passes the back side of the ancient mission church dedicated to St. Francis of Assisi.

There may well be an artist or so seated on a canvas camp chair busily trying to capture on canvas the majesty and beauty of those massive, buttressed walls of the church.

This church has stood solidly, a refuge for residents during roving Indian raids over 200 years ago, a refuge for the weary spirit from the hurly-burly world of today. The *camposanto* - cemetery - in front of the church is walled in with a low wall, but a cross-surmounted wide portal gateway leads in to the huge, hand carved wooden doors. They are open from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. every day, and in summer months there is a nightly lecture at 9 p.m. Then one may see, and experience, the "mystery" painting at the right of the altar.

The painting is called "Shadow of the Cross." In daylight or artificial light it depicts Jesus standing on the shore of the Sea of Galilee. We are all familiar with the phenomena of eyes, in a painting, seeming to be looking directly at us, regardless of which angle we stand in relation to the canvas. In this painting the whole body, not merely the eyes, seems to face the viewer, regardless of where he may be standing. There is another phenomenon, however, that is far stranger.

When lights are turned off and complete darkness prevails, the painting becomes another one completely. The background takes on a luminous glow, not unlike moonlight. The shadowed figure of Jesus changes posture, a cross appears over the left shoulder

and a halo appears above his head. Snap the light back on, and once again there is the quiet figure by the sea.

This painting was executed two years before the discovery of radium by a Canadian artist, Henri Ault. It was a mystery to him, too. He disclaimed any knowledge of the reason for the change, saying that he believed

himself demented when he went into his studio at night and discovered the luminosity. He called in friends - and they, too, could see what happened to this art work.

No explanation has yet been found. Sir William Crookes, a British physicist, was the first to try to discover the reason - unsuccessfully. No luminous paint has yet been developed that will not oxidize and darken within a relatively short time. More recent tests with Geiger counters, light tests and scrapings have revealed nothing as to the reasons for the change when exposed to light and darkness.

The Shadow of the Cross painting was exhibited in galleries in all parts of Europe and North America before being purchased in 1948 from an Atlanta, Georgia gallery by Mrs. Herbert Sydney Griffin of Wichita Falls, Texas and Ranchos de Taos for the Ranchos mission church.

A second piece of art work that carries its own mystery is now on display in this lovely mission church. In 1966 the condition of the church had become so deplorable that a complete renovation became imperative, bringing on a community controversy. The roof was leaking badly, the old vigas were seriously decomposed at the point where they rested on the aged adobe walls.

Plastering of the 4 to 6 foot thick walls, which had in modern times taken several hundred parishioners nine days to complete, was no longer adequate. Artists and lovers of the old arts were afraid that a renovation would spoil this beautiful church. But something had to be done!

Under the leadership of a dynamic priest, Father Manuel Alvarez, the church is now "more original than ever." John Gianardi, who

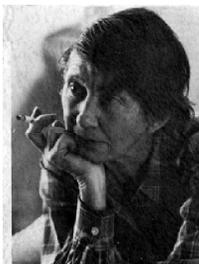


Photo by Beverly Gilis

Ghosts, miracles, religious tales and history are mingled in these "living legends" which are still told in the pueblos, towns and villages of New Mexico. Now collected into one volume, they serve to enrich our knowledge of the Santa Fe Country.

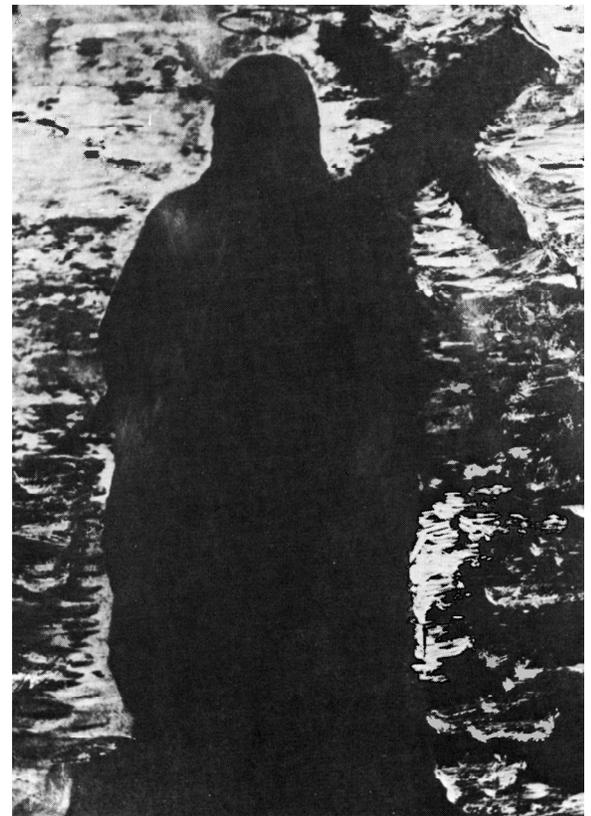
Alice Bullock, book editor and feature writer for the Santa Fe New Mexican, has explored "the land of enchantment" in depth, ferreting out the legends and folklores of New Mexico. For over three years she has collected these stories, recording and thus saving many of them for posterity.

An "almost-native" New Mexican (she came to the area at age eight), Alice grew up in Gardiner and graduated from Colfax County High School in Raton. She became a country school teacher and then a reporter and free-lance writer.

Married to Dale Bullock, a publisher, she has managed to combine writing, housekeeping and photography.

The site of each legend recorded here may be examined in a single day — with a return to Santa Fe by sundown.

The Mystery Painting is now exhibited in the Parish Office. Lectures are done 2 or 3 times a day.



specializes in the restoration of old buildings was commissioned for the task. So delicate was the work that loyal parishioners could be of little help, but at a cost of \$74,000 the restoration was accomplished.

Inside and out, the work was thorough. In tearing out the confessional walls, a workman discovered a framed bas relief of St. Anthony. Why was it there? No one knows. How long had it been there? No one knows that either, but on the back are some almost illegible initials and the word "Quito."

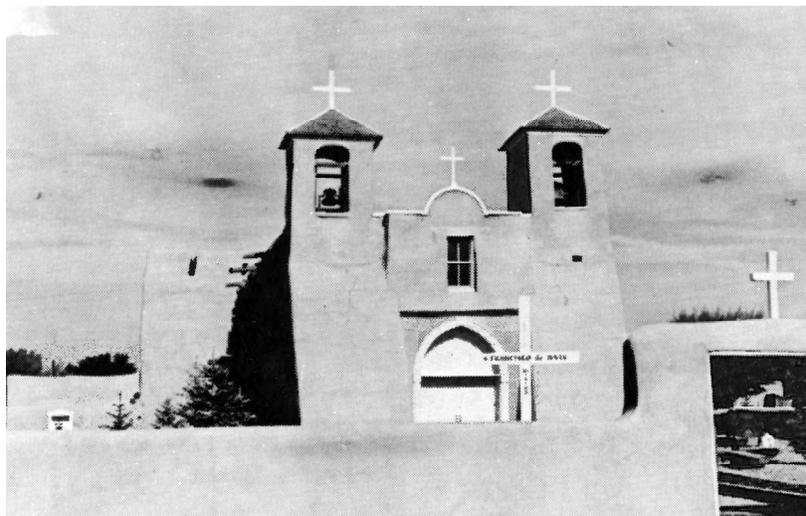
Father Alvarez, originally from Quenca, Ecuador, is morally certain this art work came from his native country because of the frame. It is decorated with bits of mirror glass in a manner and style not practiced anywhere else other than in Ecuador. St. Anthony is now with the other decorations used in the church.

Beautiful old art work, paintings, statuary and other objects in the church have been valued at a half million dollars or more, though this value would not be possible on the open market without substantiating church records. It takes the proof of their antiquity to establish their monetary value.

Most of the old vigas have been replaced, but the hand carved, vegetable dye painted corbels are original. The distinctive Santos

of the 17th century are still here, and the old silver processional crucifix and chimes are still in constant use.

There is now a floor (under which repose the bones of many early parishioners) and today there are Spanish colonial type pews blending gracefully with the restored splendor of early days. Originally the mission floors were hard packed earth, and worshippers stood or knelt during services. Electric lights supplement the candlepower of days gone by, but their light is purposely diffused, soft.



Father Alvarez recalls when, during the first year of his tenure at Ranchos, he was told bluntly, "The church must be extensively repaired or it will be condemned." The Ranchos community is not a wealthy one. It seemed hopeless, but he remembered the words spoken to Francis of Assisi in a 13th Century vision, "Go, Francis, repair My church for it is nearly falling down."

Father Alvarez believed the St. Francis of Assisi Mission could be repaired, restored. It was a proud and happy priest who participated in the re-dedication services in the summer of 1967. With him, in addition to the parishioners participating in the ceremony, were Archbishop Davis and 60 priests of the diocese.

Donations are gratefully received.

“The History of the Archives & Library of the Society”

by Paul C. Figueroa, April 2024

The History of the Archives and Library of the Society When the Taos County Historical Society received incorporation by the State of New Mexico on January 9, 1962, Article III stated its major functions “will be to discover and collect any materials which may help to establish or illustrate the history of the area.” Later, the By-Laws of the Society established the Archives and Library Committee that reinforced its responsibilities “for gathering, cataloging and storing any and all materials of historic interest.”

After its 1962 incorporation, the Society’s records reflect several actions and activities. A Library Committee was formed with 1962 leadership by Mrs. Mary H. Brook, Chairperson, and committee members Sally Howell, Claire Morill and Miss Grace Annis with the latter to continue clipping articles on Taos history. In the 1968 Annual Report, President Ernest Lyckman acknowledged and recognized “...the help and cooperation with (Society) activities... (from) Kit Carson Memorial Foundation and the Kit Carson Museum for our “home” (headquarters, depository, office, etc.)”

By the 1990’s the By-Laws of the Society included the establishment of Standing Committees that included Archives and its function. President Thomas Bruce’s 1991 Annual Report indicated “the acquisition of storage cabinets for our room in the old Forest Service Office on Armory Street. Two locked cabinets have been acquired and now hold photographs and records of the Society.” Earlier that year Officers of the Board of Directors of the Society requested this space from the Forest Service and Town of Taos. Unfortunately a flood incident in the basement affected the Society’s records. Therefore in October 1992 letters thanked the Forest Service for the use of the building for storage of these records and requested from Town Manager Gus Cordova space on the 1st floor to “avoid possible recurrence of unfortunate incident.” The minutes of October 12, 1992 of the Board of Directors state “it was felt all materials in the hands of various Board members since the basement flood should be given to Curt Anderson, Chairman of Archives Committee, who can keep the materials in his possession or replace them in the basement until a permanent location is confirmed.”

By 1994/95 President Andy Lindquist’s Annual Report stated that “archived materials for the Society contained in a steel cabinet and a four drawer file are now stored in a closet at Coronado Hall at the Civic Center and the Board is still seeking a permanent storage location. The present objective is to maintain material only relating to the history of the Taos County Historical Society itself.” In 1995 the Old Taos County Courthouse Task Force was established by Taos County Board of Commissioners to assist

its commitment to the community to renovate the facility and conserve its art treasures.

Task Force members included Chairperson Gabriel J. Romero and two active members of the Taos County Historical Society – Sadie Knight and Corina Santistevan. The Task Force was charged with undertaking a complete review of existing and potential future uses of available space.

A compelling proposal from the Taos County Historical President Andy Lindquist, approved by the Board of Directors, for use of a room in the Old County Courthouse was summarized and shared with Society members in a November 15, 1995 newsletter. Space in a room would be used for meetings, for storage of the Society’s archives and as a place to dispense historical information to the public among other activities. When and if approved by the County Commissioners the space would signal a new era in the life of the Taos County Historical Society.



Now, forward to 2022 and the Society’s occupation of the original District Judges Office in the 1934 County Courthouse. With the securing of funds by the County for the renovation of this historic structure, access to the History Room of the Taos County Historical Society changed. In 2020/21 the Society received significant, large library gifts from Doug Peterson, John Ramsey, Juan Romero and Corina Santistevan. A revitalized volunteer Archives and Library Committee cataloged over 1,200 volumes before Society space on the second floor was no longer available. Where to go for the continuation of work such as the Corina Santistevan Collection of research materials? Fortunately the Lunder Research Center on the campus of the Couse-Sharp Historic Site agreed to loan rent free space to the Society for its Archives and Library Committee to process the Santistevan Collection. A grant from Northern Rio Grande National Heritage Area for supplies and interns enabled the completion by December 31, 2023 of over 22 linear feet of materials. The descriptive finding aid can be found on New Mexico Archives online at nmarchives.unm.edu.

Current projects for the Archives and Library Committee at its temporary site include the Julia Moore Collection related to her role as Co-editor of Taos: A Topical History and the cataloging of Taos County Historical Society documents. Co-chairs of the Archives and Library Committee, Virginia Dodier and Paul Figueroa are available Monday and Thursday from 1:00-5:00pm to continue volunteer archival work and assist with any inquiries. By the end of 2025 the Committee and the Taos County Historical Society anticipate a return to the second floor of the historic County Courthouse to share the rich treasure of Taos history with the public.

Taos County Historical Society Honors “The Taos News” by Larry Torres

It is fascinating to think that the first steps toward literacy in Taos began in 1598, when brothers Hernán and Luis Serrano-Martín came from Zacatecas, México with the Oñate expedition. Their descendants became the paternal grandparents of Padre Martínez. Their names were José Martín and Micaela Valdez, who had settled at Santa Rosa de la Capilla in Abiquiú, New Mexico. His maternal grandparents, Juan Antonio Santisteban-Coronel and Francisca de la Luz Trujillo then settled in La Cañada de Cochití. His parents were Antonio Severino Martínez and María del Carmel Martínez.



THE TAOS NEWS

Their offspring then were [Padre] Antonio José Martínez (Jan. 17, 1793), María Estefana Martínez (Jan. 1, 1797), Juana María Martínez (July 26, 1799), José María Martínez, José Santiago Martínez and Juan Pascual Bailón Martínez (1833). Fr. Martínez moved out of the Martínez Hacienda and lived in his home next to the Church. He had brought the first printing press on this side of the Mississippi in 1835. In 1826, he had established a coed elementary school for both boys and girls. In 1833 he sowed the seeds for a seminary from which 16 men were ordained to the priesthood; and in 1846 his law school graduated many of the earliest lawyers and politicians of the Territory of New Mexico.

Who would have thought, that in 1835, Antonio José Martínez of Taos would become Padre Martínez, the founder of New Mexico's first newspaper, 77 years before this territory became a State in 1912? He named his newspaper “El Crepúsculo de la Libertad” (The Dawning of Liberty) a title that it still bears in its Spanish language section today. Although he only printed six copies of the newspaper, Martínez went on to use his printing press for other endeavors such as grammar books for children in the first co-educational school this side of the Mississippi, for seminary studies, and for law books.

Across the years, some of the first editors of “El Crepúsculo”, went on to work at The Taos News, as it was commonly known, when it was purchased by Robert Moody McKinney in 1959. He was U.S. Ambassador to Switzerland and Liechtenstein under President John F. Kennedy. The honorable Mr. McKinney had taken a building on the corner of Camino Placitas and Lower Ranchitos Road in Taos that had once been a grocery store. This

became, for decades to follow, the offices of The Taos News until it moved to its present location at 226 Albright Street. In 1978, present owner Robin McKinney bought The Taos News from Congressman Frank Gannett along with The Santa Fe New Mexican newspaper.

Some of his first local newspaper editors were Mr. Felix Valdez, who even kept the printing press in his home, Mr. J.B. Martínez Sr., and Mr. Wally Olds in 1963, who followed were by a myriad of other editors. The original editors were followed, by the most

recent, namely: Billie Blair, Mike Stauffer, Jess Willians, Luella Kramer, Gary Maitland, Jerry Padilla, Staci Matlock, Deborah Ensor, Rick Romancito, and John Miller. Mr. Miller has been the news editor for the last ten years. Ms. Lynn Robinson has directed the material in The Tempo art and entertainment section for the last four years. Publisher, Chris Baker created the yearly event called The Citizen of the Year Awards and has directed that annual most-anticipated event for the last twenty four years.

Some other early contributors to the newspaper were Mr. Juan Márquez de Desmontes, who created a cartoon series called “Pepe y Pancho”, followed by journalists Adelecia Gallegos, Angie Cantu, Kathy Córdova and Larry Torres.



Larry Torres, who is now approaching his one thousandth ¿Habla Usted Spanglish? column, wrote under various column titles: He assumed his first column, titled: “Aquí en los Valles” in 1989, from his predecessor, reporter Winifred Rusk. It eventually became the first book, “Yo Seigo de Taosi.” The next series, turned into the book: “Cruising the Camino Real.”

Then came the dual-language series of books like “The Adventures of Ole Johnny Mudd, The Diary of a Cowboy, Mother Goose con Chile

Verde, In the Footsteps of the Hermit, The Boy who Never was, The Children of the Blue Nun, and Bogey Creatures of the Hispanic Southwest”, many of which are now published books found on the Amazon website. The articles that didn't become books, turned into illustrated booklets, or drama, and stage plays like “El Niño Perdido” and “Las Posadas, or documentaries and films like “Los Matachines Desenmascarados”, and “Los Pastores.” Many of them are on display at the Museum of International Folkart in Santa Fe.

Lectures, Field Trips & Special Events
(Tentative Schedule)

June 1st - 2 PM

“Aldo Leopold in Tres Piedras” by Richard Rubin

July 6th - 8 AM

“Nuevo Mexico Profundo”

Church Tour: Las Trampas, Truchas & Cordova

August 3rd - 2 PM

Presbyterian Missions of Northern NM by Virginia Dodier

September 7th - 2 PM

Arroyo Hondo Arriba Land Grand by David Arguello

October 5th - 2 PM

Southwestern Indian Detours by Maggie Duval

November 2nd - 2 PM

Taos Folklore by David Maes

December 8th - Sunday at Noon

CHRISTMAS LUNCHEON & SILENT AUCTION

Taos County Historical Society
Board of Directors

President: Ernestina Cordova

Vice-president: David Maes

Secretary: Judy Weinrobe

Treasurer: Ron Stoner

Board Members

Trinidad Arguello • Bernadine DeHerrera

Virginia Dodier • Donovan Lieurance

Programs

Committee

Folklore & Local History

Trinidad Arguello

Membership

Donovan Lieurance

Publications/Website

Dave Cordova

Archival & Library

Virginia Dodier, Maggie Duval & Paul Figueroa

Special Events

Peter Allen, Scott Abbott & Donovan Lieurance

Hospitality Committee

Carmen Lieurance

The Taos County Historical Society was formed in 1952 for the purpose of “...preserving the history of the Taos area.” This part of New Mexico has a fascinating history, full of people, events, stories and places.

If you are interested, we invite your participation in our field trips or lecture programs, or by supporting the Society by becoming a member.

BECOME A MEMBER

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

Membership categories:

Individual \$30

Family \$50

Sustaining \$100

Business \$60

To become a member: send a check, along with your name, address, email and phone # 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



Taos County Historical Society
PO Box 2447 i Taos, NM 87571

