

# PASSWORD



THE EL PASO COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
Volume 47, No. 1 · El Paso, Texas · Spring, 2002



THE EL PASO COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## Corporate Sponsors

*We appreciate the support of our business and professional sponsors  
and we encourage our readers to patronize these businesses.*

### **AMIGO PRINTING**

5742 Trowbridge  
El Paso, TX 79925  
915-779-2669

### **CHARLOTTE'S INC.**

5411 North Mesa  
El Paso, TX 79912  
915-581-1111

### **CREATIVE STAFFING SERVICES**

1533 North Lee Treviño, Suite 200  
El Paso, TX 79936  
915-591-5111

### **CURREY ADKINS COOK**

6633 North Mesa, Suite 605  
El Paso, TX 79912  
915-866-6604

### **DAVE'S LOAN COMPANY**

216 South El Paso St.  
El Paso, TX 79901  
915-533-3334

### **DELGADO, ACOSTA, SPENCER, LINEBARAGER, HEARD, PEREZ, LLP.**

215 North Stanton  
El Paso, TX 79901  
915-533-6637

### **DISCOVER EL PASO ASSOCIATION, INC.**

813 Marimba  
El Paso, TX 79912  
915-833-3423

### **EL PASO COMMUNITY FOUNDATION**

P.O. Box 272  
El Paso, TX 79943  
915-533-4020

### **GADDY CONSTRUCTION COMPANY**

5875 Cromo Drive, Suite 100  
El Paso, TX 79912  
915-581-3966

### **MB GROSS GHS ASSOCIATES**

1735 George Dieter  
El Paso, TX 79936  
*Interactive web content for real  
estate, retail, and destinations.*  
(915) 774-5447

### **TRAVIS C. JOHNSON, ATTORNEY**

Chase Tower, Suite 1600  
201 East Main Drive  
El Paso, TX 79915  
915-532-1947

### **SYLVIA J. KELLEY, FINANCIAL SERVICES**

5959 Gateway West, Suite 250  
El Paso, TX 79925  
915-772-2277

### **KEMP SMITH LAW FIRM**

221 North Kansas, Suite 1700  
El Paso, TX 79901-1441  
915-533-4424

### **LAWYERS TITLE OF EL PASO**

301 East Yandell  
El Paso, TX 79902  
915-543-7600

### **LIFT TRUCK SERVICES**

218 Raynolds  
El Paso, TX 79905  
915-778-0058

### **DENISE K. MANKIN**

*Freelance Graphic Artist*  
5459 Soledad Lane  
El Paso, TX 79932  
915-587-0548

### **MARTIN FUNERAL HOME, INC.**

3839 Montana Avenue  
El Paso, TX 79903  
915-566-3955

*Continued on inside back cover.*





**Marilyn C. Gross**  
*Editor*

**Richard Field**  
**James M. Day**  
*Associate Editors*

**Richard Baquera**  
*Book Review Editor*

### Editorial Board

J. Morgan Broadus  
Elizabeth Ferguson  
Jack Ferguson  
Clinton Hartmann  
Douglas Meed  
Leon Metz  
Harvey Plaut  
Mary Ann Plaut  
Carol Price Miller  
Claudia Rivers

### Honorary Board Members

Mrs. John J. Middagh  
Mrs. Eugene O. Porter

### Graphic Artist

Denise K. Mankin

**Historical Society Logo**  
José Cisneros

ARTICLES APPEARING  
IN THIS JOURNAL  
ARE ABSTRACTED  
AND INDEXED IN  
HISTORICAL ABSTRACTS  
and  
AMERICA: HISTORY  
AND LIFE

Correspondence  
regarding articles for  
PASSWORD may be  
directed to the editor at:

5133 Orleans  
El Paso, Texas 79924

# PASSWORD

VOLUME 47, NO. 1  
SPRING, 2002  
EL PASO, TEXAS



## CONTENTS

### Hall of Honor

**Roy T. Chapman** ..... 3  
FRANK McKNIGHT

**Mother Praxedes Carty:  
A Remarkable Life** ..... 9  
PATRICIA JEAN MANION, SL, Ph.D.

**Daniel Roy Ponder  
1907-1965** ..... 17  
RICHARD H. FEUILLE

**Previous Hall of Honor  
Recipients 1961-2001** ..... 21

**The Casasola Legacy in El Paso** ..... 23  
SAMUEL SISNEROS

**The Fall Guy** ..... 29  
*First Place Award, Historical Memories Contest*  
J. HAL GAMBRELL

**Nicholson Bottling Works** ..... 33  
BILL LOCKHART

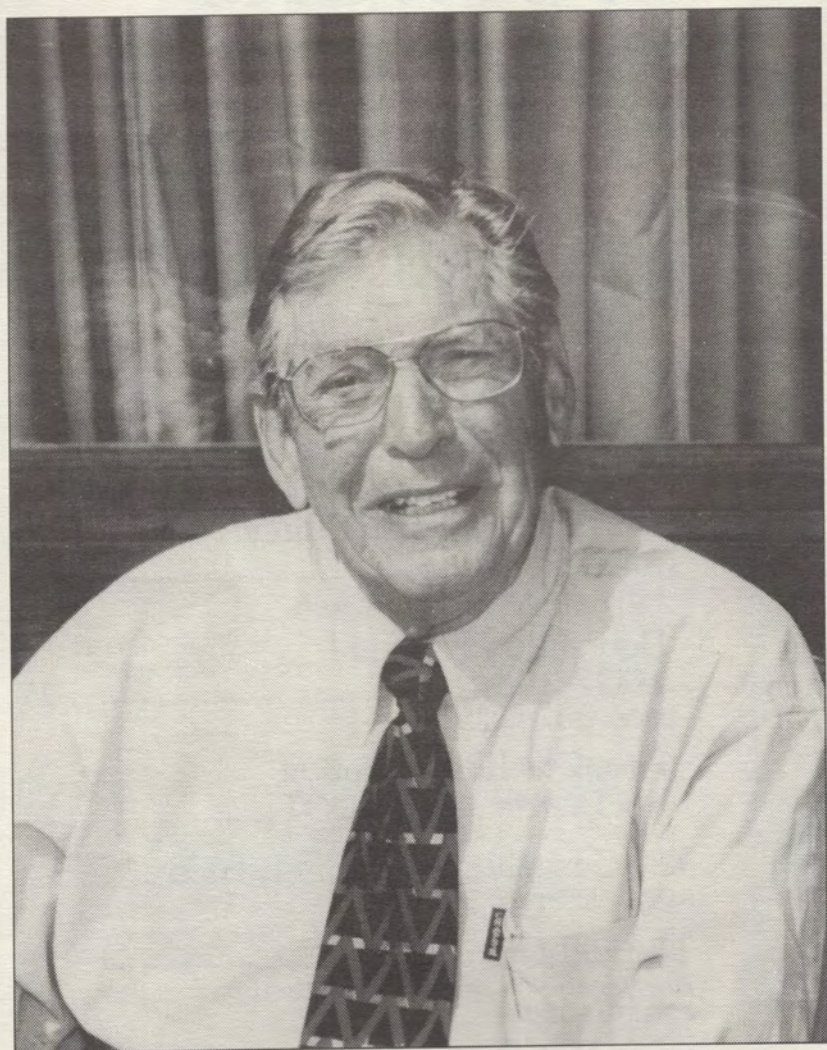
**Georgetown Produced  
Millions in Silver, then Quit** ..... 43  
PAXTON P. PRICE

**Book Reviews** ..... 48

Ralph Adam Smith,  
*Borderlander: The Life of  
James Kirker, 1793-1852* ..... JAMES M. DAY

Jerry Thompson, editor,  
*Civil War in the Southwest:  
Recollections of the Sibley Brigade* ..... HARVEY PLAUT





*Roy T. Chapman.  
Photo from El Paso County Historical Society archives.*

© 2002 The El Paso County Historical Society, El Paso, Texas

The El Paso County Historical Society  
disclaims responsibility for the statements and opinions of the contributors.

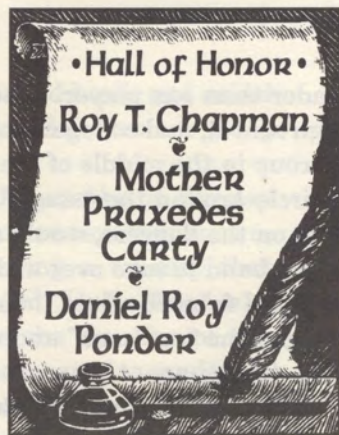
Entered as periodical mail at El Paso, Texas



• Hall of Honor •  
2001

# Roy T. Chapman

By Frank McKnight



life-long resident of El Paso, Roy Chapman, was born on March 14, 1915 and attended El Paso schools. He graduated from Austin High School in 1933, but elected to skip college. He opted instead to pursue an apprenticeship in radio broadcasting, which led him to television, and ultimately to advertising.

In 1928, Roy's mother, his younger brother and two younger sisters left the family home on Pershing Drive in El Paso to join Mr. Chapman in Mexico where he was engaged in the mining industry. Their house was leased to Judge John Harper with the agreement that eleven-year-old Roy was to live with the Harpers so that he could attend school. The Harpers diligently carried out their assigned duties, one of which was insuring that Roy would spend a minimum of thirty minutes a day practicing his saxophone. The Harpers were to have another connection with Roy's life later as their daughter Betty would become the wife of his future boss, Karl Wyler, Sr.

Roy attended Alta Vista elementary school and Austin Junior High on Rio Grande Street where Loren A. Kirchner was his music teacher and Roy played in the school's orchestra. Kirchner thought it was time for a marching band and Roy volunteered to be the drum major. Doing marching turns and reverses was a learning process for both Kirchner and Roy, and it wasn't long before Roy was strutting in near perfection.

Roy was a sophomore when Austin High School opened its doors in 1930. It wasn't long before Roy, a saxophone player, helped to start the Jimmy Field's dance band, a "Glenn Miller" style group. The band members soon decided that Roy was a better



leader than sax player. The band played for sorority, fraternity, high school, and college dances. In those days the "stags" formed a group in the middle of the dance floor, with the couples dancing a circle around the "stags." Our stalwart band leader, Roy, his eyes on the dancers, would spot a good looking girl, tell some one in the band to take over while he went down to "see how the band sounded from the floor." Keith Teague was one of the good looking girls he "cut in on" and with time and persistence she became Mrs. Chapman.

During high school, Roy acquired an El Paso Times paper route, delivering three hundred papers seven days a week. He became acquainted with Mayo Seamon, circulation director for the Times, with whom he would later have a close association. Roy was graduated from Austin High School in May 1933.

About 1935 the La Posta Night Club and Restaurant opened on El Paso Drive in the lower valley. Jimmy Field's band was engaged for a seventeen-week run, playing seven nights a week from six to midnight. The engagement included a thirty-minute broadcast to be aired each night for the entire seventeen weeks on El Paso's only radio station, KTSM. By the end of the engagement Roy was thoroughly convinced that he had found his calling in life—he would be in radio.

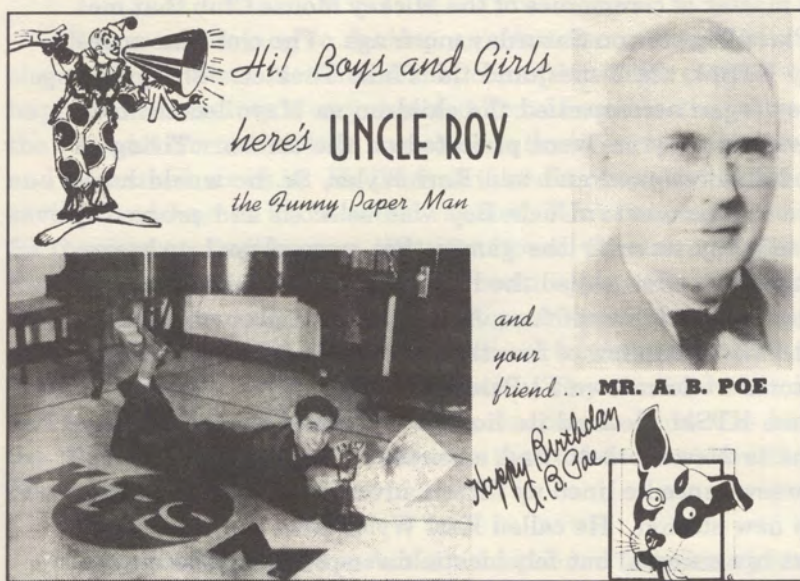
In May 1935, in the middle of the depression, Roy approached Karl Wyler Sr. to inquire if there was not some way he could learn the radio broadcast business. Karl was the manager of KTSM and told Roy that the station had only seven employees and he wasn't sure from one month to the next that he could keep all of them. Roy offered to work for no pay, knowing that his paper route would continue to support him. After several months on the job, Karl began giving Roy two dollars and fifty cents each week to buy gasoline for his car. A few months later he was put on the payroll at \$15 a week!

While an intern, Roy was in the studio when the announcer, assuming that the record would spin for three or four more minutes, departed for the rest room. The record came to an unexpected end and started clicking so the quick thinking Roy lifted the needle and announced: "This is KTSM atop the beautiful Paso del Norte Hotel. The time is 2:00 pm." The announcer returned and chastised Roy for having the effrontery to touch the equipment, let alone, to announce a station break! Knowing that



his mother was an avid radio listener, Roy called home and asked her how he had done. Her reply was simple, "Son, you are going to improve."

Van DesAutels, a silver tongued announcer, who on Sunday morning read the "funny papers," as the comic section was known, departed El Paso on very short notice, leaving a vacancy that Roy quickly volunteered to fill. Thus emerged "Uncle Roy," who not only read the "funnies," but also was the founder of the "Safety Ranger Club." Boys and girls were encouraged to send their names and birth dates to "Uncle Roy" to become members of the club. They promised to abide by the club's rules, one of which was that they would cross the street only at corners after looking both ways. Rules were apparently made to fit all the applicable situations. Uncle Roy might remark over the air "I have received a report that Jimmy Johnson has not been drinking his orange juice at breakfast. This violates club rules." Jimmy quickly started drinking his orange juice, never to know that it was his mother who was responsible for that comment! On their birthdays young members were sent greeting cards that showed a picture of Uncle Roy lying on the floor reading the "funnies." This led to other children's shows, including the Mickey Mouse Club and Kiddie Show.



A KTSM Card: "Uncle Roy" Chapman, the "Funny Paper Man" and A.B. Poe who sponsored the program, circa 1936. Photo from El Paso County Historical Society Archives.



The "funnies," through Uncle Roy, took us out of the doldrums of the 30's and made lives happier for both children and adults. Uncle Roy was the Pied Piper—the "N'sync" of his day! To those of you who may be enjoying a "senior moment," N'sync was the musical group that performed in the Sun Bowl in August of 2001, attracting preteens and their parents with attendance exceeding 42,000. Although it is not possible to be sure of the size of Uncle Roy's Sunday morning audience, it must have included at least 90% of El Paso kids between the ages of five and twelve.

Roy was still in fast pursuit of Keith whose grandmother was Jeannie Frank, El Paso High's legendary English teacher. Roy was now a full time announcer at KTSM and despite Keith's objections, often received telephone calls from Mrs. Frank, advising him that if he had attended El Paso High he wouldn't be making so many grammatical errors. These calls did not however dampen the blossoming romance as Roy and Keith, who were married on July 19, 1941, recently celebrated sixty years of marriage and have two children, Jack T. Chapman and Keith Elaine Packard, eight grandchildren, and four great-grandchildren.

Mayo Seaman, Roy's old boss at the *El Paso Times*, was the original master of ceremonies of the Mickey Mouse Club that met at the Plaza Theater on Saturday mornings. The club was sponsored by KTSM, the Times, and the Plaza Theater. The grand Wurlitzer organ accompanied the children as Mayo led them in songs, while the lyrics were projected on the screen. Tiring of the job, Mayo resigned and told Karl Wyler, Sr. he would have to find a replacement. Uncle Roy was selected and proceeded enthusiastically to enter the games that were played on stage, including a quiz show called the Kiddy Kollage. What a bargain! Ten cents for two hours of fun. A mother could drop off a kid or two and have two hours of free time to shop or window shop the many stores in downtown El Paso.

When KTSM received its license to start a TV station, Roy was sent to New York to find advertisers for the new station. With perseverance he lined up fifteen advertisers, enough to support the new station. He called Karl Wyler from his hotel room, to report his success, but felt he couldn't spend KTSM's money to call Keith and instead wrote her a letter. His room was across from the hotel elevators and mail chute. Clad only in his skivvies, he left the room to mail the letter. He realized immediately that



the door had closed and locked behind him! He summoned a bell boy on the hall phone and asked him to bring up a key. In the mean time the elevator door opened and out came two men in tuxedos accompanying two ladies in formal gowns. He remarked that he was locked out of his room and had called for a bellboy. They wished him God speed! For years this story served as fodder for Roy's children who told this story whenever they were called on for "show and tell." Men on the street would stop Roy and ask if he were the one caught in the hotel hallway in his shorts! In 1938 KTSM joined the National Broadcasting Company network which gave listeners up-to-the-minute coverage of the events that would lead to World War II. As did many of the young men, Roy soon left the station to become a flight instructor for the United States Army Air Corps, after which he returned to KTSM as vice president of programming. He later became executive vice president and general sales manager for both television and radio which had become Tri-State Broadcasting Company. After twenty-five years with Tri-State, Roy resigned his position when he became a part owner and executive vice president of Mithoff Advertising, where he remained for twenty-four years, having ultimately become the president of Mithoff.

Roy recalls trying to develop an advertising campaign and slogan for the State National Bank, one of Mithoff's clients. He happened to run into a very dejected Tom Howell in the lobby of the Paso del Norte Hotel. It was obvious that Tom had a problem and Roy asked about it. He learned that almost every bank and savings and loan in El Paso had rejected Tom's loan application for the funds to build a new office for Howell Electronics. There was only one institution to which he could apply. His last resort was to be the State National Bank. Roy ran into Tom a few days later and learned that the State National would make the loan "with pleasure." With that information, Roy realized that he had found his slogan and advertising campaign. Thus was born the "How can we help you?" campaign that existed for more than two years.

Throughout his work career which spanned forty-nine years, and even into his retirement, Roy strove to make El Paso a better place to work and live. He was co-chairman of the March of Dimes during the polio epidemic and was an organizer and board



member of Crimestoppers for which he also served as vice-president. He served as president of the Sun Bowl Association, the Southwestern Association of Advertising Agencies, and the Downtown Kiwanis Club. Roy served as director of the Chamber of Commerce and the Airport Board, and as chairman of the Salvation Army Advisory Board, Leadership El Paso, and the Industrial Development Board. He was a long-time member of the Armed Forces Committee. The Advertising Federation of El Paso named him Ad Man of the Year in 1970 and presented him with their Life Membership award in 1982. He received the Jaycee Distinguished Service Award, and the Outstanding Citizen Award from the Board of Realtors in 1982. Roy served as an Elder of the First Presbyterian Church, and serves the University of Texas at El Paso as a member of the President's Associates, The UTEP Fellows, the University of Texas Chancellors, and the major gift committee for the Legacy Campaign.

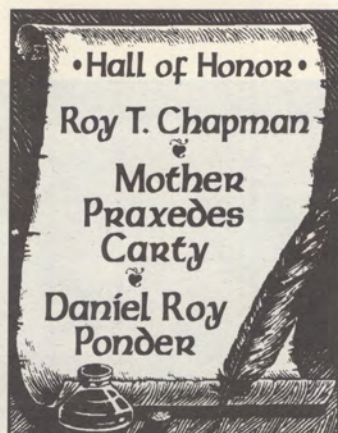
By his many endeavors Roy Chapman has indeed left a positive mark on our community.





• Hall of Honor •  
2001

# Mother Praxedes Carty: A Remarkable Life



By Patricia Jean Manion, SL, Ph.D.



he small village of Bawnboy in County Cavan, Ireland, was the scene of an unusual departure in 1865. The village miller and his family were leaving for North America. Mark Carty and his wife Ellen with their eleven children were emigrating to the United States.<sup>1</sup>

Like so many others they were facing an unknown future. What they could not possibly have known then was that one daughter, Susan, only ten years of age at the time, would become a pioneer among women educators in their new country. Susan Carty would, as her crowning achievement, build a magnificent academy in El Paso, Texas.

Susan Carty, known later as Mother Praxedes, settled with her family in St. Louis, Missouri, where Susan continued her education with the Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul. Inspired by a relative who was a Sister of Loretto, Susan at twenty decided to join the Sisters at the Loretto Motherhouse, fifteen miles from Bardstown, Kentucky. As a novice, she was given the religious name "Praxedes," a name she did not particularly like.

After a year, Sister Praxedes was assigned to Santa Fe in the territory of New Mexico in order to complete her novitiate training. The journey was strenuous. At that time the Kansas Pacific Railroad went only as far as Kit Carson, Colorado, where travelers had to transfer to a spur line that took them through Las Animas to Trinidad from which they traveled by carriage over the Raton Pass. The party led by Bishop Salpointe of Arizona finally reached Santa Fe on June 1, 1875.





*Mother Praxedes Carty, from El Paso County Historical Society*

For the next eighteen years New Mexico was to be her home. At Santa Fe's Our Lady of Light Academy, Sister Praxedes, who did not know any Spanish, was "given charge of the boarders that they might acquire English from her; and she, Spanish from them."<sup>2</sup> Her first assignment after the novitiate was to Bernalillo, New Mexico, where at twenty-three years of age she was sent to take charge of the community and the school.



According to Richard Marie Barbour SL,

Her keen eyes saw that much had to be done to improve the place so she set about having ceilings lifted; windows and doors cut in the adobe walls for more light and air and facility of movement; dirt floors boarded; calico-covered windows glazed; and portales built at the front door and around the patio to give shelter to guests and sisters. Her efforts did not stop here; she planted grapevines and fruit trees, vegetables and flowers; she did the canning and cleaning and taught embroidery.<sup>3</sup>

After only two years, in 1880, she was asked to be superior at St. Vincent's Academy in Las Cruces "where a heavy debt had been incurred for a new building. She set to work in earnest to clear away all obligations and to make other improvements."<sup>4</sup> During her years in New Mexico, she became fluent in Spanish. She loved the people and they loved her. When she was transferred from Las Cruces in 1893, Anna C. Minogue said "... her leaving was deplored as a great loss by the people."<sup>5</sup> She was Superior General when she visited Las Cruces many years later and droves of people came to the convent to see her.

Her reputation for financial competence at Las Cruces earned her a very difficult assignment in Denver, Colorado in 1894. Loretto Heights Academy was facing financial collapse. The market for Colorado's silver had disintegrated with the repeal of the Sherman Silver Purchase Act. The silver-producing West was on the verge of panic. The company holding the mortgages on Loretto Heights Academy was eager to salvage what it could. First, Mother Praxedes went to Mexico City to try to arrange loans there, but the exchange rate would have made a Mexican loan too costly. She decided to visit the trustees at the Northwestern Mutual Life Insurance Company, the mortgage holder, in Milwaukee. Before she could arrange the trip, she received word from her superiors in Kentucky that a decision had been made to sell the Loretto Heights property.

Immediately she wrote Kentucky asking for time. When the response came saying that she had the council's permission to try, she left immediately for Milwaukee, Wisconsin. When she arrived at the Northwestern offices, she was told that the board was then meeting. She asked to address them. In the meeting she learned that the board was discussing foreclosure on the St.



Mary's Academy property, also in Denver, which earlier had been mortgaged to finance Loretto Heights Academy. Under pressure to give some assurance that the Sisters of Loretto would be liable for the debt, Mother Praxedes spoke of all the property that the community owned across the country. She assured them that the debt was backed by more than just the Denver academy. When they were not readily convinced, she added: "Gentleman, if you take the house you will have to take the sisters with it." After reconsidering, they granted her more time.<sup>6</sup>

She knew that she risked the possibility that the Sisters of Loretto could lose not only the two Denver schools but other property as well if economic conditions grew worse. She notified the council in Kentucky that she had gone further than she or they had expected. Within days she heard from her superiors that conditions between the local bishop and the current mother general were such that Bishop Thomas Byrne of Nashville had been appointed ecclesiastical superior. She was asked to come to Kentucky. Rather than receiving the reprimand she had expected, Mother Praxedes found herself being asked to accept an appointment as interim Superior General, replacing the present superior.<sup>7</sup>

Stunned, she accepted the appointment. In accepting, Mother Praxedes inherited more than financial problems. She herself was to face years of difficulty with the local bishop which eventually meant taking her case to authorities in Rome. In November 1903, she sailed for Italy to request that jurisdiction over the Sisters of Loretto be transferred from the bishop of Louisville to Rome. For six months she stayed in Rome, finally receiving the formal decree on May 18, 1904.<sup>8</sup>

During her first year as Superior General she established a "normal school" for the training of sisters as teachers. From her experience at Loretto Heights in Denver, she arranged to have all the property of the Sisters of Loretto consolidated at the Motherhouse under the Loretto Literary and Benevolent Institution of Kentucky. She had the constitutions of the Sisters of Loretto approved by Rome in 1907. During those years she also established fifty-one schools and encouraged the development of two of the community's academies to become four-year colleges which would grant degrees to women. In her final year in office, 1921-1922, she planned for Loretto's first foreign mission in China.

Her work was far from finished. At sixty-eight, having retired as Superior General, Mother Praxedes took on the most ambitious



building project of her career. All her religious life she had been rescuing institutions that others had started. Now she was to oversee a project dear to her heart—a new academy for El Paso. The Sisters of Loretto already had a day school in El Paso, St. Joseph's Academy, but she foresaw the need for a large boarding school that could provide education for young women from across the border in Mexico as well as for those in El Paso. In September 1922, she moved to El Paso and took on the task of raising money and overseeing architectural designs. Earlier she had been instrumental in selecting the site in Austin Terrace, a location then on the desert outside the city. Loretto College and Academy would be built overlooking El Paso. The cost of the property was \$41,328. Two bungalows and a corner lot, adjacent to the larger parcel, cost \$22,100.<sup>9</sup>

Joseph W. Morgan & Sons, a local general contractor, was engaged to build three buildings: the academy, the convent, and a chapel. Each building was a major undertaking, and three buildings joined by two splendid colonades seemed hard to imagine. The original 1922 estimated cost of the building and the completion of the project was \$570,988. That did not include excavation, road grading, and equipment. A basic need—water—meant drilling a well deep into the desert. Records in the Loretto Motherhouse



*Loretto Academy Chapel.*

*Photo from El Paso County Historical Society archives.*



archives show the initial cost of the well at \$7000. For something so essential as a well, and for each new need, Mother Praxedes somehow found the money. Lists show that local clergymen and even her own sister, Delia Carty, were lenders. The process of financing and re-financing would go beyond the original estimates.

Mother Praxedes would spend the next ten years raising money, negotiating loans, and overseeing construction in spite of criticism that Austin Terrace was too far from the heart of El Paso. Undaunted she was determined to create a beautiful educational establishment worthy of young women from both sides of the border. The years between 1924 and 1931 were arduous, not only for Mother Praxedes but for all the sisters. The community of some sixty sisters housed at the academy lived on simple fare, sometimes having less food than was adequate for health. The "sister-faculty" at seven parish schools as well as the faculty for the academy lived there together. Because the sisters managed on little, the school was flourishing and work continued as money was available.

During the final period of the project, however, she had to direct the work from a wheelchair. In January 1931, from St. Louis, she had notified the sisters and Bishop A. J. Schuler, S.J. of El Paso that she had secured a loan of \$80,000 to complete the buildings. Before she could leave St. Louis, she fell and broke her hip. Although she spent ten months at St. Mary's Hospital in St. Louis, the hip did not heal.

At last she begged them take her back to El Paso where she said she could at least direct the work on the building from her bed. She was taken back, as requested, late in December 1931 . . . She, the great builder, the great financier, the noble religious, who might well be called the Second Foundress of the Sisters of Loretto at the Foot of the Cross, was now to suffer day and night.<sup>10</sup>

How could Mother Praxedes carry such heavy burdens for so many years? Those who knew her best would say it was due to her strong faith and confidence in God. Another characteristic which helped her greatly was the sense of humor that was hers: she enjoyed a good hearty laugh at herself as only humble people can.<sup>11</sup>

Mother Praxedes Carty died on December 16, 1933. Her youngest sister, Delia Carty, was with her. Mother Praxedes' body was taken back to Kentucky where she rests in the Loretto Motherhouse Cemetery.



*The El Paso Western American* said at the time of her death, "She associated with the great throughout her life, but she never lost her touch with humanity and especially with the poorest and the humble as became her religious life."

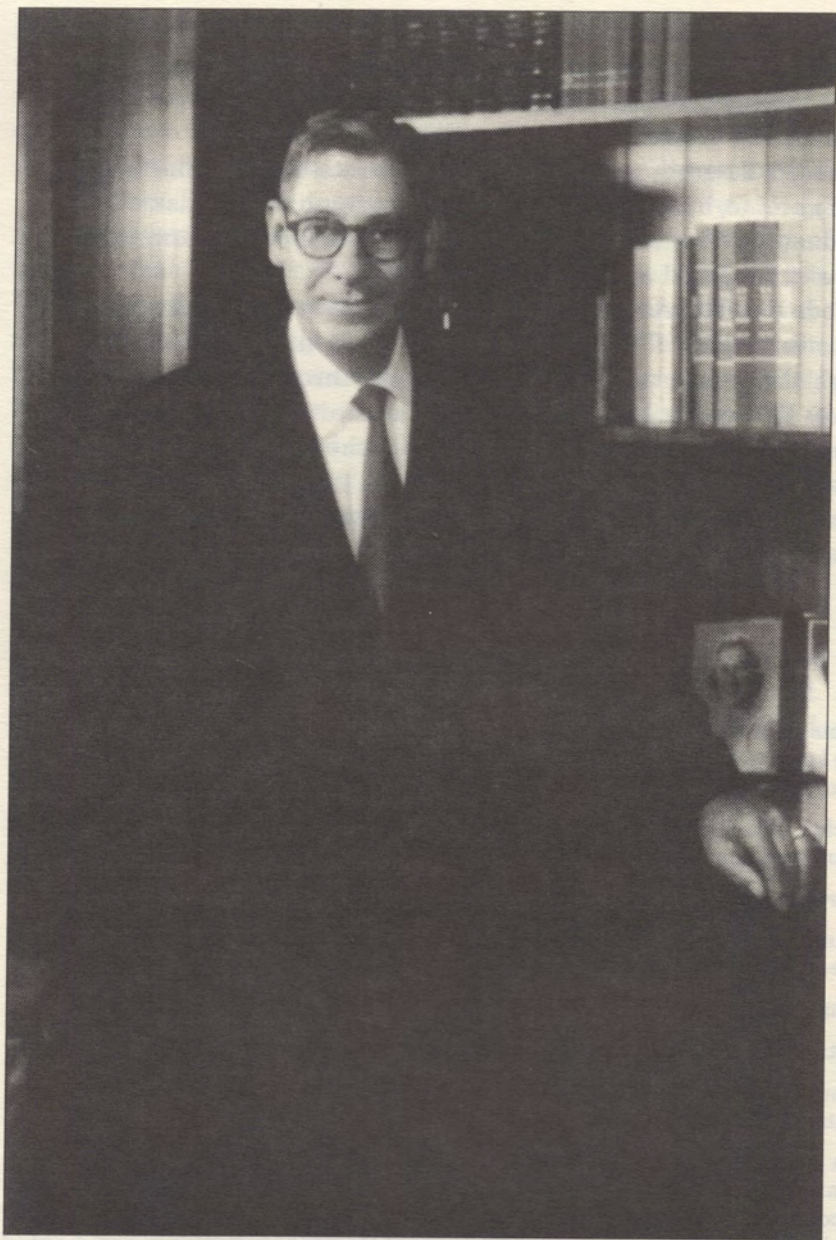
Joseph Driscoll, a long time friend, wrote of her, "She was finely feminine, but she was also strongly masculine. No task was too arduous where the glory of God, the good of souls, and the welfare of her loved Society were concerned."<sup>12</sup>

Today Loretto Academy stands majestically on its landscaped desert overlooking El Paso. Other buildings have been added through the years, but it is the terra cotta three with their red tile roofs that pay tribute to a woman whose faith was as great as her vision. She anticipated by many years the educational needs of today. Mother Praxedes Carty was more than a builder, more than a financier, she was a woman willing to ignore what others saw as folly and to step beyond the possibilities of her time.

#### NOTES

1. Facts from Susan Carty's early life are taken from her typed "Sketch" in the Loretto Motherhouse Archives, from here on referred to as LMA, Nerinx, Kentucky.
2. Richard Marie Barbour SL, *Light in Yucca Land*, (Louisville, Ky: General Printing Company, 1982). 114.
3. Barbour, p.86-87.
4. Anna C. Minogue, *Loretto Annals of the Century*, (New York: American Press, 1912) 157.
5. Minogue, 157.
6. Patricia Jean Manion, *Only One Heart* (New York: Doubleday, 1952) 215.
7. Mary Florence Wolff, *From Generation to Generation*, (Louisville, Ky: General Printing Co., 1982) 36.
8. "In an unusual collection of over thirty letters carefully penned by Mother Praxedes to Mother Francisca Lamy, the Vicarress, she sketched a detailed account of her stay in Rome which stretched out to almost six months." Wolff, 47.
9. Joseph E. Morgan document dated September 22, 1922, LMA.
10. Lillian Owens SL, *Loretto in El Paso*, (St. Louis: McMullen, 1964) 56-57.
11. Barbour, 117.
12. Driscoll, Joseph I., typescript, LMA. 2





*Daniel Roy Ponder, 1907-1965.*

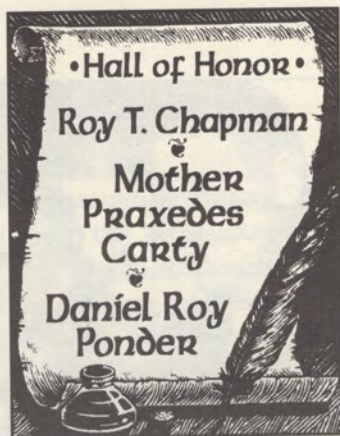
*Photo from El Paso County Historical Society archives.*



• Hall of Honor •  
2001

# Daniel Roy Ponder 1907-1965

By Richard H. Feuille



In November of 1907 Daniel Roy Ponder, who was to become the youngest mayor in El Paso's history, was born at Hotel Dieu Hospital. His parents endowed him with a notable legacy: his father, James D'Arcy Ponder, was an acting judge, county treasurer, and the editor of the *El Paso Times*, and his mother, Stephanie Gemoets, was the member of a pioneer El Paso family. Dan and his brothers, James Hart Ponder and John Gordon Ponder, grew up in El Paso. Dan attended St. Mary's Catholic Grade School on Myrtle Avenue and the College of Mines, now the University of Texas at El Paso, and completed his civil engineering studies at the University of Arizona. He married Winifred Kennedy in 1935 and they had two daughters, Virginia Anne and Elizabeth Lee.

Dan's daughter, Anne Ponder Dickson, says of her father

We have a gold scholarship pin dated May, 1917. . . . it has "St. Mary's" engraved in lovely script and three tiny bars hanging from the bottom. They are inscribed "arithmetic," "elocution," and "reading." What a signpost for El Pasoans did the little pin turn out to be! It hinted at the citizenship brewing in the fifth grader and illustrated, even then, the gifts he used later to enliven and enrich your community. He built upon them throughout his life . . .

Dan joined the R.E. McKee Construction Company where most of his work was focused on wartime efforts: the Panama Canal Zone and the Brownwood Army Air Base. In 1943 Mr. McKee made him executive assistant on the Manhattan Atomic Bomb Project for which he supervised the construction of laboratories, bunkers, and housing. Jack Brennand, another El Pasoan, worked with him on this project. On October 10, 1945, McKee, Ponder, and





*Bill Cullen, center, congratulates Dan Ponder, left, after Ponder won in the "Winner Take All" radio show in February 1948, during the United States Conference for Mayors. Photo El Paso County Historical Society archives.*

Brennand received the Army E Award for excellence from War Secretary Stimson with Robert Oppenheimer and General Groves in attendance. Karl Wyler broadcast the ceremony to El Pasoans—KTSM's first remote broadcast.

Elected to the office of mayor in 1947 when he was only thirty-nine years of age, Dan immediately began the improvements which had been stalled by the war. With Karl Wyler as one of his aldermen, he secured funding for the project that would depress the railroad tracks that bisected the city. He saw that project nearly to completion. During his tenure, improvements to Paisano Drive were made—it was straightened, widened, and lighted, creating a thoroughfare to connect Upper Valley to Lower Valley. The public restrooms in San Jacinto Plaza were rebuilt and nicknamed "Ponder's Privys." With great foresight Dan followed the stance his father had taken twenty years earlier in his editorials on conservation and he instituted restrictive water measures for the city. After service in public office, Dan formed his own company in 1949, Dan R. Ponder, Ltd. He and his lifelong friend Charles Leavell were partners on many military residential and strategic projects.

Dan Ponder was also president of Texas Homes, Inc. and of New Mexico Engineering and Construction Company. He was the founding president of the nationwide Wherry Housing Association



which built new housing on military bases, president of the El Paso Associated General Contractors of America, and a life member of the American Society of Civil Engineers.

Dan made many contributions to El Paso through his many civic efforts. He was instrumental in bringing the Kress Art Collection to El Paso and was the founding chairman of the board of trustees of the El Paso Museum of Art. His interests were not limited to the arts. He headed the drive to bring professional baseball back to El Paso, was president and chairman of the board of the El Paso Sports Association, and president of the Arizona-Texas Baseball League. He was elected to the City Charter Commission in 1954, co-chaired the Hotel Dieu Hospital Fund Drive as well as the Community Chest Drive, was a director of the State National Bank, an organizer of the El Paso Junior Chamber of Commerce, Southwest Sun Country, Sun Carnival Association, a trustee for Radford School for Girls and for the Hockaday School in Dallas. He was a member of the Knights of Columbus, an admiral in the Texas Navy, a member of the Navy League, the El Paso County Historical Society, and the Chamizal Committee. He was also a member of St. Patrick's Cathedral and a large donor to the Sisters of Loretto.



*Dan Ponder -  
50th year dinner  
of Chamber of  
Commerce at  
El Paso Country  
Club, March 1,  
1950. Photo from  
El Paso County  
Historical Society  
archives.*



Dan Ponder had a light side that embellished his accomplishments. It is said that during his tenure as mayor from 1947 to 1949, he threatened to jump into the Rio Grande if the sun did not shine in El Paso during the Sun Carnival football game, a seemingly benign threat because the sun shines in El Paso almost every day. On that eventful day however, it snowed—all day! He was saved by a little corner of the city on which the sun shone! The city council awarded him with a mink athletic supporter, which proved most distasteful to his family!

He received the Conquistador Award from the City of El Paso, the 1961 Man of the Year Award from the Board of Realtors, and the 1965 National Human Relations Award by the National Conference of Christians and Jews.

Dan Ponder died suddenly and unexpectedly in March, 1965 at the age of fifty-seven.

To quote his daughter once again,

He inherited from his father a love of books, reading, and collecting. The collection he and his dad put together has depth, [and] quality. . . . He loved his close friend Tom Lea's life of books and art. It moved him to muse once, "books are like children—there is no end to their persistent, lovable, sometimes impossibly demanding presence. He felt our libraries link us with the past, present, and future in a way that is portable, affordable, and aesthetically pleasurable . . . . He would have embraced the Internet and Amazon.com as he did many new concepts for his time . . . Dan Ponder . . . a man of vision, character, and the ability to influence for the better several events in the life of El Paso.

It could not be better said.



*These articles were prepared for publication with the assistance of Cheryl McCown who compiled much data and wrote the printed material that was placed at each place setting at the Hall of Honor dinner and which was submitted for the publicity for the event.*





---

**PREVIOUS HALL OF HONOR RECIPIENTS**


---

	<i>Deceased</i>	<i>Living</i>
1961	James Wiley Magoffin	Lawrence Milton Lawson
1962	Richard Fenner Burges	Rev. B.M.G. Williams
	Maud Durlin Sullivan	
1963	Eugenia Schuster	Robert Ewing Thomason
1964	Allen H. Hughey, Sr.	Mrs. W.D. Howe
1965	Ernest Ulrich Krause	Lucinda de Leftwich Templin
1966	Charles Robert Morehead	Maurice Schwartz
1967	Robert E. McKee	Chris P. Fox
1968	Zachariah T. White	Jack Caruthers Vowell
1969	James Augustus Smith	Jean Carl Hertzog
1970	Haymon Krupp	Eugene O. Porter
1971	Hugh Spotswood White	Charles Leland Sonnichsen
1972	Olga Bernstein Kohlbeg	Joseph F. Friedkin
1973	Juan Siqueiros Hart	Judson F. Williams
1974	Joseph Magoffin	Jose Cisneros
1975	James Price Hague	Tom Lea
1976	Mrs. Otto Nordwald	Fred Hervey
1977	Cleofas Calleros	Msgr. Henry Buchanan
1978	Robert R. Jones	Edward W. Rheinheimer, M.D.
1979	Thornton Hardie	Louise Johnson Schuessler
1980	Henry Thomas Ponsford	Dr. J. M. Hanks
1981	Henry C. Trost	Abraham Chavez, Jr.
1982	William Martin Yandell, M.D.	Mrs. Margaret Schuster Meyer
1983	Felix Martinez	Elizabeth Hooks Kelly
1984	Brigadier Gen. Anson Mills	Manuel Gregorio Acosta
1985	William H. Burges	William I. Latham
1986	Mrs. Guy Hallet Johnson	Karl O. Wyler
1987	Dorrance D. Roderick	Gertrude Goodman
1988	Jeanie M. Frank	Cdr. (Ret.) Millard McKinney
	Thomas J. Beall	
1989	Brigadier Gen. S.L.A. Marshall	D. Harold Wiggs, Sr.
1990	William Henry Fryer	Willard W. Schuessler, M.D.
1991	Vernus Carey	Charles H. Leavell
1992	Mrs. Alice Pierce Barry	Louis W. Breck, M.D.
	Benjamin S. Dowell	
1993	Florence Cathcart Melby	Richard C. White
	Hughes de Courcy Slater	
1994	Juana Maria Azcarate	Eliseo H. Baeza
	De Stephenson	
	William Michie Coldwell	
1995	Henry H. Varner, M.D.	Myrna George Deckert
1996	Frank Feuille, III	Peter deWetter
1997	Dr. Walter Nathaniel Vilas	Ellis O. Mayfield
1998	Major Joel Van Horne	Dr. Diana Natalicio
1999	Leonard A. Goodman, Jr.	Richard W. Mithoff
2000	Owen P. White	Woody Hunt
2001	Mother Praxedes Carty, SL	Roy T. Chapman
	Daniel Roy Ponder	

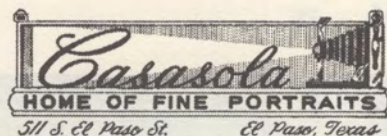
---



Alfonso Casasola in the Casasola Studio lobby. Dated 1941.  
*Casasola Studio Collection* [PH041 10-00001]







# The Casasola Legacy in El Paso

By Samuel Sisneros



Until recently, if someone in El Paso, Texas were to fancy himself a photographer, he would often be referred to as a "Casasola."<sup>2</sup> Many El Pasoans exhibit family photos on their walls or in photo albums, that are stamped with the Casasola trademark. The Casasola Studio Collec-

tion is now housed in the Special Collections Department of the University of Texas at El Paso Library. It is through these photos and because of the reputation of the Casasola family and the contributions they have made to their community, that the Casasola legacy is very much part of El Paso history.

The Casasola Photography Studio, located at 511 South El Paso Street, was a flourishing downtown El Paso business for seventy years. Established in 1922, at the close of the Mexican Revolution, the studio and the people whose images were captured by its cameras have become a part of El Paso's unique border history. Exposed on negatives and printed on paper, the images of Paseños are symbols of stories yet untold, a pictorial text of those who lived during the 1900s. These portraits captured memories of weddings, graduations, quinceañeras, and first holy communions, as well as providing many passport, immigration, and military I.D. photos.

Successful not only because of the talents of Alfonso Casasola, the founder of the studio, but also because of its favorable reputation which was attributed to the hard work and commitment of Emma Flores de Casasola, Alfonso's second wife. She maintained the business for forty of the seventy years of its operation. Yet, it was undoubtedly the Casasola name that gave the studio its momentum in El Paso. The Casasolas, a family of photographers in Mexico City who were often called the "Royal Family of Photo-





*Unidentified family. c.1937.  
Casasola Studio Collection [PH041 04-00018]*

graphers in Mexico,” gained their well-deserved reputation during the Mexican Revolution.<sup>3</sup> The most renowned of the Casasolas was Agustin Victor Casasola (1874-1938), a photojournalist best known for photographing the political, social, and cultural life of Mexico during the Mexican Revolution, who founded the Association of Photojournalists. He was employed by the federal government of Mexico as the official chief of photography in the Department of Culture.<sup>4</sup> Agustin’s brother, Miguel, and his sons, Agustin Jr., Ismael, and Gustavo contributed many photographs to the Casasola archives in Pachuca, Mexico. The youngest son, Agustin Jr., said of the Casasola’s predisposition to be photographers, that they were “brought up” in photo studios, and it was the fate of the generations of Casasolas to become photographers.<sup>5</sup> Alfonso was a first cousin to Agustin Victor and his brother Miguel.<sup>6</sup> Being born into this celebrated family, it was Alfonso Casasola’s destiny to be the first Casasola to establish this family legacy in El Paso.

Alfonso Casasola was born on August 2, 1889 to Mariano Casasola and Vicenta S.<sup>7</sup> in Mexico City, where, as a member of the Casasola photography family, he had learned the art and trade of photography. But he did not make his mark in Mexico. As a result of political persecution during the revolution, he fled



into exile in the United States. He and Luz Maria Salamanca Soto, his first wife, migrated around 1913 to Arizona where he became the Mexican consul to the towns of Douglas and Nogales. In 1920, they moved to El Paso, Texas and lived at 807½ St. Vrain. They operated the Houston Park Grocery at 819 East Boulevard.

In 1922, Agustin Victor Casasola had come to El Paso and had set up the Casasola Photography Portrait Studio located at 511 South El Paso Street.<sup>9</sup> Agustin apparently purchased La Popular Fotografía, owned by Raúl C. Lopez, which was located at the same address prior to 1922,<sup>10</sup> however the following year it was Alfonso who was listed in the El Paso City Directory as the owner of the Casasola studio.<sup>11</sup> Agustin, probably because of his professional distinction or wealth, came to El Paso to help his cousin Alfonso set up the business, but was not heard of again in El Paso.

While managing the studio, Alfonso was also the official photographer of *El Continental*, the Spanish language newspaper, and the *El Paso World-News*. In 1933 Alfonso compiled the official album of the *Fiestas de la Revolución*, which were staged in Ciudad Juárez in commemoration of the anniversary of the Mexican



Unidentified. Dated February 18, 1937.  
Casasola Studio Collection [PH041 04-00049]



Revolution. A total of 3,000 copies were made although it appears that none exist today. Alfonso also hired and trained many local photographers to work in his studio. The sister of his first wife, Maria Elena, came from Mexico City to work at the El Paso studio. She was familiar with the Casasola operation because she also was married to a Casasola, Gustavo, who was the son of Agustin Victor.<sup>12</sup>

In addition to Alfonso's continued relationship with his family in Mexico, he formed new relationships and was much respected by the Mexican-American community in El Paso. He became quite active in the El Paso and Ciudad Juárez area and was well known for his fondness for wrestling and boxing. Aside from interests in sports and his work at the studio and the newspapers, Alfonso was the organizer of the Baby Layette Society, a group that aided poor families during the depression years. He alone finished more than 1000 layettes or care packages for the newborn.<sup>13</sup> Alfonso was also a founding member of the Pan-American Optimist

Club that was instrumental in uniting and aiding programs of social reform.<sup>14</sup>

Alfonso's first wife and his second wife both worked for social causes. Luz Maria, his first wife, organized fund-raisers and fiestas to benefit poor children during Christmas, and for humanitarian relief in Mexico.<sup>15</sup> After her death from pneumonia in 1934,



*Unidentified. First Communion, dated 1933. Casasola Studio Collection [PH041 06-00004]*



Alfonso married Maria Emma Flores on Sept. 26, 1935 at San Ignacio Church in El Paso. Emma was the daughter of Celso S. Flores and Maria C. de Flores from El Paso.<sup>16</sup> The *padrinos* or sponsors of their marriage were Alfonso's friend and fellow El Paso businessman, Cleofas Calleros and his wife Benita, who was Emma's oldest sister. The Casasolas lived above the studio for several years until Alfonso's death on February 18, 1948.<sup>17</sup>

Emma successfully carried on the business and, in addition to providing photographic services, she was a member of the Pan-American Women's Club and the Professional Photographers Association.<sup>18</sup> She was also the founder of the Women's Charity Committee that aided the poor in El Paso.<sup>19</sup> After Emma's death in 1987 her daughter, Estrellita Casasola, continued the business for a few more years. Estrellita finally closed the studio doors in 1992, surely with much pride in the many contributions that had been made to the El Paso community by Alfonso, Luz Maria, Emma, and the Casasola Studio.

As the photos of the Mexican Revolution recorded history of the times, so did the photos from the Casasola studio record the social history of the El Paso area. The photos were not necessarily of significant national events, but they are photos which offer a visual memory of the people of the unique El Paso and Ciudad Juárez region. The renowned Casasola name made its mark in the history of El Paso, not only because it is the success story of an immigrant-owned business, but also because Casasola photography studio left a photographic legacy for the people.

In El Paso, as in Mexico, photography and the Casasola name are synonymous.

---

**SAMUEL SISNEROS**, a native of Albuquerque, New Mexico, received his MA in Borderlands History at the University of Texas at El Paso. Prior to graduate school, Samuel worked at a photo studio as a digital imaging artist. As a staff member of the Special Collections Department at the University of Texas at El Paso Library he combined his love for history with his background in digital imaging. He created a digital photo archive and a photo database which is searchable on the Internet. He also supervised the digitization of the Casasola Studio Collection.

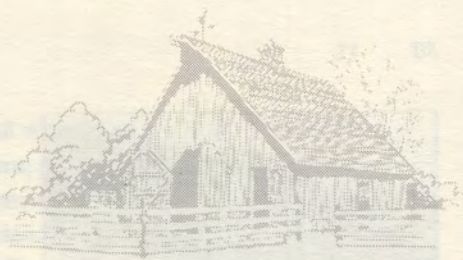


## ENDNOTES

1. The images in this article were scanned from negatives in the Casasola Studio Collection, Special Collections, University of Texas at El Paso.
2. Conversation with Irma Montelongo, UTEP graduate student whose family members are residents of the Segundo Barrio area of downtown El Paso. January 11, 2002.
3. *El Paso Herald Post*, 8-13-1984, B-1-1. Virginia Turner.
4. Agustin Victor Casasola, et al. *El poder de imagen y la imagen del poder. Fotografías de prensa del porfiriato a la época actual* (Chapingo, Universidad Autónoma Chapingo) 177.
5. Rebeca Monroy Nast, "Los Casasola: un destino de familia" in *Alquimia*, (Sept-December 1997) no. L, 21.
6. Phone conversation with Gustavo Casasola, Estudio Casasola, Mexico City. His parents were Gustavo Casasola and Maria Elena Salamanca Soto. December 12, 2001.
7. Marriage record book, San Ignacio Parish, El Paso, Texas. September 16, 1935. Incomplete surname for Vicenta as shown in text.
8. Hudspeth's El Paso City Directory, 1920.
9. Hudspeth, 1920.
10. Hudspeth, 1921, 1922.
11. Letter from Cleofas Calleros to manager of El Paso Hilton Hotel, May 3, 1933, El Paso, Texas. Cleofas Calleros Papers, Special Collections, University of Texas at El Paso Library.
12. Interview with Gustavo Casasola, December 12, 2001.
13. *El Paso Herald Post*, February 18, 1948.
14. *El Continental*, February 16, 1941.
15. *El Continental*, December 17, 1934.
16. The San Ignacio marriage record gives her birth date as August 25, 1910.
17. *El Paso Herald Post* February 18, 1948. Alfonso's last will and testament lists the brothers to whom he distributed money as Roberto, Leopoldo, Ricardo, Adolfo, and Enrique.
18. Interview with Estrellita Casasola, November, 2001, Oral History Institute, UTEP. Samuel Sisneros and Kristine Navarro.
19. *El Continental*, February 16, 1941.







# The Fall Guy

As remembered by J. Hal Gambrell

*This article was awarded the first prize in the Historical Memories contest sponsored by the El Paso County Historical Society in 2002.*



In the early 1920s, General Billy Mitchell testified before Congress that he had obtained information that Japan had plans for an attack on Pearl Harbor in Hawaii. These plans included information that the attack would be made by air—almost exactly as it was carried out some eighteen or so years later. General Mitchell, Chief of the Army Air Corps, was censured due to the sensitive and tenuous relationship between the United States and Japan. He faced a court-martial and soon retired.

Secretary Albert Bacon Fall, Department of Interior proposed that immediate covert action be initiated to prepare for the defense of Hawaii and, in particular, the petroleum supply for the Pacific fleet. In order to accomplish this covert mission, President Harding, Secretary of Commerce Herbert Hoover, and Assistant Secretary of the Navy, Franklin Delano Roosevelt were included. The decision to remove the Teapot Dome naval oil reserves from Wyoming to Hawaii was made. The question of how to accomplish this in a covert manner in order not to alert Japan to our knowledge of their plans was discussed by the four men. Secretary Fall suggested that an old “pardner” of his, Ed Dohaney, with whom he had spent several years prospecting for gold in the Hillsboro, New Mexico area, was completely trustworthy and was also a “pardner” with Harry Sinclair of the Sinclair Oil Company. It was agreed to approach these two men quietly on the feasibility of moving the naval reserve oil from the Teapot Dome Field to tank farms in Hawaii. The deal was made and the oil was moved





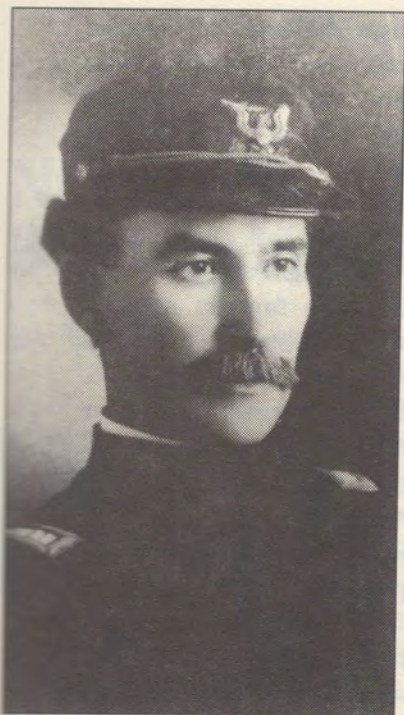
*Brigadier General Billy Mitchell in 1920. From the El Paso County Historical Society archives.*

to Hawaii, thus the Navy did not need to return to the continental United States for re-fueling when World War II commenced with the attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. The forethought and initiative displayed by Secretary Fall should have merited his receiving the Medal of Freedom, the highest civilian award presented by a thankful nation. However, politics raised its ugly head.

Citizen Fall had had the opportunity to purchase my grandfather's ranch which adjoined his, but he needed financial help. Fall turned to his old wealthy mining "pardner" for a loan. Ed Dohaney was happy to oblige, and Fall purchased the William Ray Harris White Mountain Ranch for a sum in excess of \$100,000. This brought his ranch holdings to 1719 sections or 1,100,160 acres, of which the White Mountain Harris Ranch was only a small part. In those days a man was as good as his word and such deals were often made on a handshake. The political buzzards descended, however, and Fall was impeached for accepting a bribe of \$100,000 from Dohaney and Sinclair for the lease of the naval reserve mineral rights at Teapot Dome. Fall was in a vise. To explain too much could jeopardize the government's covert action of moving the oil to Hawaii as a cushion against Japan's attack plans. Hence, the term "fall guy" was coined and Albert Bacon Fall took the "fall" for the Harding administration. This was not one of our government's better moments.

It is interesting to note that Fall, Dohaney, and Sinclair were all charged with accepting and giving a bribe. However, Dohaney and Sinclair were found not guilty of *giving* a bribe while Fall was found guilty of *receiving* a bribe. I've always wondered—how can one be convicted of receiving an "ungiven" bribe? At any rate, Fall lost his ranch and was sentenced to one year in federal detention





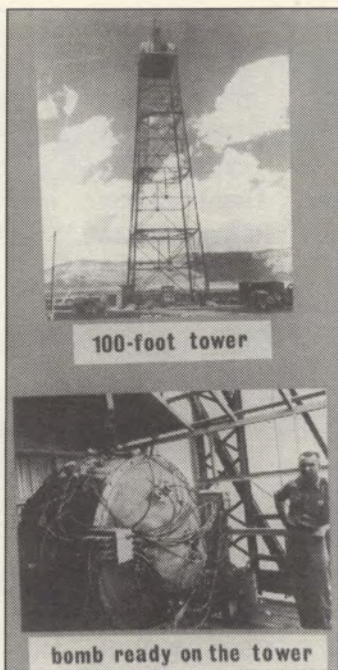
*A.B. Fall, Captain, First Territorial Regiment of New Mexico. From the collection of Leon C. Metz.*

and was fined \$100,000. At this time, an ill and broken Fall was receiving care at his daughter's home on McKinley Street in El Paso, Texas. My father, Dr. James Halbert Gambrell, Sr., drove me, my mother, and my sister to the house on McKinley Street. An ambulance arrived, and my father, with the driver, took the cot in, brought Mr. Fall out, and drove him up to Three Rivers, New Mexico for a short visit on the ranch he loved so dearly en route to his incarceration. He was allowed to serve his time in the New Mexico State Penitentiary at Santa Fe. After serving his sentence, Fall returned to William Beaumont Hospital, now William Beaumont Army Medical Center in El Paso. He died in 1944.

I have always thought that any one of the three conspirators could have cleared A.B. Fall's name. However, President Harding died a curious and very "un-presidential" death prior to the trial. At the same time, Herbert Hoover and Franklin Delano Roosevelt were both too deeply involved in running for presidency and with maintaining the covert status of the oil removal in order to step forward themselves. Who knows what course history might have taken if Harding had lived?

The ranch was acquired by the Palomas Land and Cattle Company which overgrazed it for ten years and then walked away, leaving the ranch in the hands of the Crocker State Bank of California. Two of my uncles, Will Ed Harris and A. Dee Brownfield, with Jesse York and Truman Spencer, formed a syndicate called "The Quatro Amigos" and purchased the ranch. They began putting the ranch on sound financial footing. About twenty sections in the southeastern portion of the ranch were sold to Albert Burch. The expanse called the 7X Well and the Willowsprings area were





*Trinity Site, from the  
El Paso County Historical  
Society archives.*

sold to George McDonald. This area later became the Trinity Site, the firing ground for the world's first atomic bomb. The Three Rivers Country, approximately 110 sections, was sold to Tomas Fortune Ryan III. This included the Fall ranch house and other buildings together with my grandfather's famous historic stone house which had been erected by the cattle queen of New Mexico, Susan McSween Barber, the former wife of Alex McSween who had headed one faction of the infamous Lincoln County War.

The Quatro Amigos planned to ranch the remainder of the country—some 600 sections—eighteen townships long and two townships wide. My uncle, A. Dee Brownfield, was in Mexico buying four thousand steers to stock the ranch when he was told

to cease and desist as the Chief of Army Engineers wanted to lease the ranch for a bombing range. The lease was consummated with the stipulation that all improvements would be restored on return of the property. When the lease, with extensions, ran out, the government took all but fifty sections of this vast Tularosa basin ranch, approximately 352,000 acres.

My interest in the Quatro Amigos Ranch came from having been asked to consider managing the ranch. I had worked for the Victoria Land and Cattle Company, a large ranch around the Animas Mountains, south of Hatchita, New Mexico. This ranch once ran forty thousand cows on its range and was later reduced to sixteen thousand with sound management practices put in place. I found myself attending Texas A&M University in 1941 studying animal husbandry and range management, in order to prepare for a ranching career.

Pearl Harbor changed those plans.

On December 7, 1941, General Mitchell's information was proved correct—that changed not only my life, but the lives of millions forever.



# Nicholson Bottling Works

By Bill Lockhart



Constantino P. "Gus" Nicholson founded bottling plants in Mexico in the late nineteenth century and eventually made his way to El Paso. Once in the border city, he bought Union Bottling Works in 1919, but eventually abandoned the enterprise to form Nicholson Bottling Works in 1925. With seven other bottlers operating in El Paso at that time, including the powerful Empire Products Corporation and Magnolia Coca-Cola Bottling Company, Nicholson's decision to join the competition was courageous to say the least. As a locally owned and operated company, Nicholson Bottling Works remained in business for an impressive fifty-four years.

Born in Greece about 1870, "Gus" Nicholson led a colorful life prior to his arrival in El Paso. As a young man he emigrated from Greece to Mexico where he opened a candy factory and soda water bottling plant in Allende, Coahuila. Nicholson employed more than a hundred girls to manufacture and pack the candy which was then delivered by mule on a route that took from two to three weeks, if all went well. During his stay in Mexico, Nicholson was twice ruined by revolutionary activities. In both cases, one of the competing factions took all his mules and supplies. At one time a group of about fifty revolutionaries, including women and children, were fleeing government troops and came to Nicholson's plant. They told him that pursuing soldiers intended to kill the revolutionaries, women and children included. Nicholson concealed the group among his large hay bales, and when the soldiers arrived, he invited them to search his premises. Finding no one but Gus and his employees, the soldiers left to continue their search. Nicholson fed the revolutionaries before sending them on their way.<sup>1</sup>



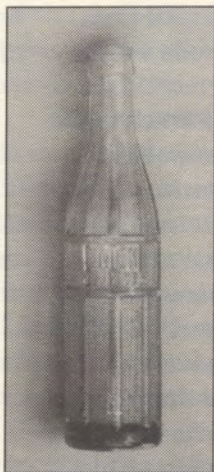
The loss of a second business was enough for Nicholson. In 1911 he packed up his family and returned to Greece. During their stay there, a severe earthquake devastated their home, collapsing almost half of it into rubble. Nicholson's son, George, asleep in his crib at the beginning of the quake, was catapulted from the second story hallway into the street but was uninjured. Although the rest of the family also escaped unhurt, Nicholson moved again, this time to the United States. As with many immigrant families of the era, Gus was convinced by the immigration agents that the family name of Nicolopolos, should be "Americanized," thus Constantino Nicolopolis became Gus Nicholson. The family settled in an almost entirely earthquake-free area, El Paso, Texas.

### **Union Bottling Works (1916-1935)**

Nicholson was apparently tired of the candy business, but bottling was in his blood. When he bought the Union Bottling Works, in 1919, it was located at 409 South Virginia Street. Francisco B. Dominguez had founded the bottling operation as Francisco Dominguez & Company in 1915 and renamed it Union Bottling Works the following year. Joe Salcido bought the business in 1918, but sold it to Nicholson the following year. The business bottled a variety of flavors, all under the Union name, and, with the onset of Prohibition, acted as a wholesale outlet for near-beers, such as NIB, or non-intoxicating beverage. Nicholson delivered his products in a horse-drawn wagon loaded with fif-

teen to twenty cases at a time, usually with the assistance of a hired helper. Aside from temporary helpers, Nicholson worked the business alone until 1921 when he took on a partner, John Beys. The two men eventually reached a point of irreconcilable differences, and Nicholson offered his partner the choice: Beys could buy-out Nicholson or Nicholson would buy him out. Beys elected to buy Nicholson's portion, and the two parted company in 1925.<sup>2</sup>

John, Andrew, and Samuel Beys had arrived in El Paso about 1918 and began working—John at Lynchville and the other two brothers at the Orndorff Café. By 1920, Andrew had opened the American Candy



*Union Bottling  
Works Bottle*



Kitchen, but the enterprise was short-lived. The following year Andrew and Samuel opened the Golden Gate Café and the U & I Quick Lunch, while John became involved with Nicholson. The Golden Gate soon faded into history, and the brothers changed the name of their remaining operation to the U & I Café. In 1930, Samuel ran the brother's newest enterprise, the Golden State Café while Andrew remained in charge of U & I.<sup>3</sup>

At some point, the brothers formed Beys Brothers & Company with Union Bottling Works and their restaurant enterprises as subsidiaries. In 1931, John employed only one worker in the Union Bottling Works plant with an additional laborer during the peak months of July and August. Two one-ton capacity trucks actually distributed the finished products, delivering a total of 12,364 cases of Union soda in six-and-one-half or seven ounce bottles during the year. Union sodas sold for a wholesale price of sixty-one cents per case. Workers at Union labored ten hours a day during a six-day work week, although the week was reduced to five days during the coldest months of the year.<sup>4</sup> Beys continued to operate Union Bottling Works until its dissolution with the U & I Café, in 1935 when he joined his brothers at the Golden State Café.

### **Nicholson Bottling Works (1925-1979)**

Nicholson was still determined to stay in the bottling business, so, in 1925, he founded Nicholson Bottling Works. He built his plant at an ideal location for his convenience at the back of his house. For the duration of the company, the address was listed in El Paso city directories as "rear of 1024 Wyoming [Ave.]." Although most of his other children eventually chose different occupations, Nicholson's son, Alkividias, who was always known as Alkie, remained in the bottling business. Alkie described the functioning of the bottling business as a great deal of hard work.

His typical day started early: he would load his truck with 300 cases, run the route, and return by noon. In early days, Alkie would service the Lower Valley one day, Second Ward the next day, the Northeast area of El Paso the following day. He continued in that pattern until the entire city had been served and it was time to start over. Alkie got up at 4:00 o'clock every morning to prepare machines and sometimes worked until 10:00 o'clock at night. While on the route, he checked the Nicholson displays in stores, replaced the product that had been sold, and loaded the empty bottles onto the truck. In addition, he would service





1927 photo of Nicholson Bottling Works—from left to right: a friend of the family; C. P. "Gus" Nicholson; his wife, Anna; daughter, Jenny; the family's maid; son, Solon; Alkie; and son, Kimon, at that time the manager.

the many households that bought Nicholson sodas by the case. Frequently, at that time, Nicholson, as well as other bottlers in town, would mix the different flavors in a single case to provide variety for stores as well as individual home customers. The idea of six-pack carriers did not appear until the 1930s.

Nicholson started his bottling works in the middle of Prohibition. It was the era of the speakeasy but, of greater importance to bottlers, it was also the era of near-beer. Non-alcoholic grain beverages permeated the market, and Nicholson could see the advantage of being a distributor. Accordingly, the company sold Goldcrest, Golden Glow, and NIB until the end of Prohibition in 1933. In addition, the firm bottled Howdy Orange and Muscadine Punch during the same period. Approximately at the end of Prohibition, Nicholson ceased bottling franchised brands to concentrate on his own Nicholson flavors.

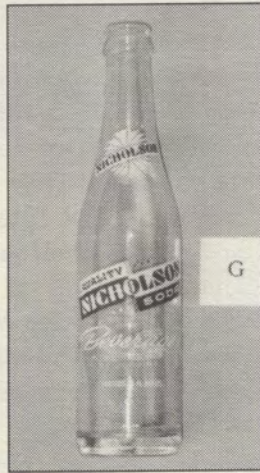
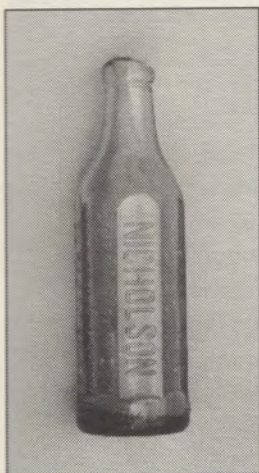
In 1931, Nicholson employed five workers in the plant during peak season, decreasing to two employees in the winter and even to one in December. At that time, the company used three one-ton capacity trucks and sold 9,042 cases of six-and-a-half-ounce drinks and 1,690 cases of eight-ounce beverages, a total of 10,732 cases per year. Nicholson flavors sold for sixty-five cents per case wholesale.



Although family members worked longer hours, employees generally labored eight hours a day, six days a week, a very light workload for the early 1930s.<sup>6</sup>

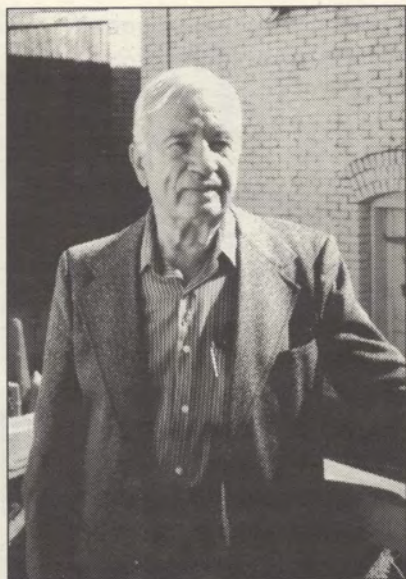
In the early days at Nicholson, Alkie received \$1 per day, even though he was married and had two children. He was offered \$35 per week for delivering the Las Cruces route for the Sure-Best Bread bakery which he described as "a big outfit with sixteen trucks." Alkie enjoyed the work for about a year but quit because he could not stand watching his father run the Nicholson routes in the winter. He took over as manager of Nicholson Bottling Works in 1945.

In October 1948, C. P. Nicholson died at the age of seventy-eight. His wife Anna, had preceded him by only three months, passing away in July.<sup>7</sup> The couple had borne six children: George, Kimon, Alkividas (Alkie), Solon, Jenny, and Bill. George, the eldest, remained in Greece after the family's return and was killed fighting Germans in World War II. Kimon was a sharp businessman; he owned the Olympic Ice Cream Parlor; two bars, Arizona #1 & #2; the Red Star Inn on Oregon; and, in partnership with his brother, Solon, an apartment building on West Missouri. Kimon also managed the bottling plant until his untimely death of Malta fever following a trip to Mexico in 1945. Solon had managed Arizona #2 and enjoyed working at the bar. After Kimon's death, Solon traded his interest in the apartment building to Kimon's widow for title to the bar. Both considered the deal a success; Solon had his bar, and his sister-in-law later sold for \$60,000 the



*The Nicholson Brand Bottles*





*Alkie Nicholson at the age of 86.*

ment in the bottling works, Alkie managed prize fighters for over twenty years—including top-ranked Manny Ortiz who won professional fights for ten years. Alkie and Ortiz traveled all over the United States, including fights in Puerto Rico and Honolulu, Hawaii.

Nicholson's wholesale price for a case of bottled carbonated beverages was sixty cents and sixty-five cents in the early 1930s. Since the soda retailed at five cents per bottle, the stores made a gross profit of sixty cents a one hundred percent markup. The company bottled only with cold water because it gave the resulting beverage a better taste and because it mixed better with the carbon dioxide gas. Tap water at ordinary temperature does not absorb the gas well. They used city water that was purified by passing it through two filters. According to Alkie, it made "the ideal soda pop." Nicholson's obtained most of their bottles from Liberty Glass Company of Sapulpa, Oklahoma,<sup>9</sup> although they also purchased some from Mexican glass companies. The bottles manufactured in the United States endured much better, lasting about three times as long, and were of higher quality than the less expensive Mexican bottles. Flavoring extracts were ordered from companies in California and Wisconsin at \$25 per gallon. The Crown caps that were used to seal the bottles were purchased from

apartment building that she had purchased for \$11,000. Solon took his turn at managing the plant in 1958 and 1959, but was replaced again by Alkie in 1960.<sup>8</sup> Sister Jenny married Andrew Meletis and moved to Albuquerque but later returned to El Paso.

Alkie operated the Red Star Inn for three months but decided to return to the soda business after a fight with two customers over nonpayment of their bill. Although Alkie won the fight, he decided that the business was not worth the aggravation. With his involve-



the western branch of the Crown Cork & Seal Co. located at 1601 Magoffin Avenue in El Paso.<sup>10</sup> The caps, purchased in 1,000 gross lots were originally applied with a foot pedal machine that simultaneously filled and capped each bottle. The foot operation was later replaced by the complete automation of the bottling process. Nicholson's used only pure cane sugar, three one-hundred pound sacks per batch. The operators originally stirred the vats with hand paddles but later upgraded to mechanized mixing. The new mixers had a propeller in the bottom of the vat connected by a pole to the motor fixed above the surface level of the beverage. Mechanization improved the quality of the mix as well as conserving manpower. The returnable bottles were cleaned in an automatic bottle washer that ran at 300 degrees centigrade. The bottles came out "like a diamond."<sup>11</sup>

Nicholson Bottling Works delivered to El Paso's Upper Valley, reaching as far north as Mesilla and Las Cruces, New Mexico and to the Lower Valley, as far south as San Elizario, Clint, and Fabens. During its heyday, the company operated four trucks, one for the Upper Valley, one for the Lower Valley, one for the city of El Paso, and one as a spare. Both Nicholsons were proud of the service they gave their customers. In 1942, the United States introduced the *bracero* program, allowing and encouraging Mexican laborers to cross legally to the American side of the river as agricultural workers. Nicholson took advantage of the influx of new drinkers,



1996 photo of old Nicholson Bottling Works



selling large quantities of soft drinks to employers of braceros in the Lower Valley. Nicholson set a special price for Amen Wardy who employed between 1,000–8,000 braceros at a time to work on his farm in Ysleta and bought 300–400 cases of Nicholson soft drinks per day for his workers. Wardy set dozens of bottles of soda on a large table where the bracero workers formed long lines to await their turns for the refreshing drinks provided by their employer at the end of the day. During the later part of the business, one truck provided home deliveries to Northeast El Paso where some families bought as much as five cases of drinks per week. Although Nicholson advertised twice in the telephone directories and placed a few ads in local newspapers, he relied mainly on word of mouth from satisfied customers to promote his product.

Alkie Nicholson retired from the bottling business in 1971, selling the bottling works to Herman and Herbert S. Vitela who continued to operate under the original name until closing the business in 1979.<sup>12</sup> Nicholson continued to live in the house in front of the plant and still rents the old Nicholson Bottling Works building as a warehouse for dry goods.

---

**WILLIAM "BILL" LOCKHART** is an archaeologist who lives in Alamogordo, New Mexico. He received both his bachelor's and master's degrees from the University of Texas at El Paso. He has taught at Park College, New Mexico State University, El Paso Community College as well at the University of Texas at El Paso. He is presently on the faculty of New Mexico State University in Alamogordo. He has researched extensively and has published in *Password*, in the *Artifact*, and in other publications. Although the Bottle series has been published on the Internet through the Townsend Library, New Mexico State University at Alamogordo, we feel that we should complete the series that we began.

#### NOTES

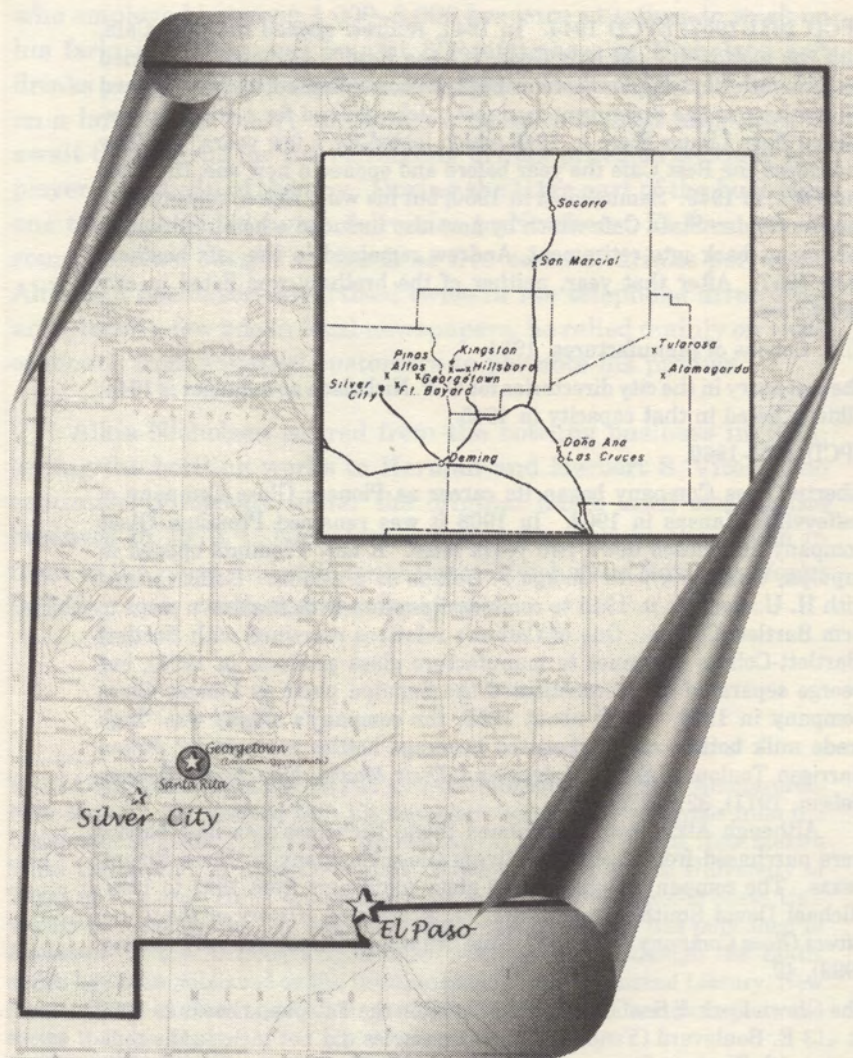
1. Unless otherwise cited, the information for this article came from a series of interviews with Alkividias (Alkie) Nicholson in November/December 1995. It is notable that documentary evidence, when available, confirms Nicholson's memory.
2. El Paso City Directories, 1916-1935.



3. EPCD 1918-1931.
4. EPCD 1935; United States Census of Manufactures, 1931.
5. EPCD 1931-1957: EPCD 1944. In 1941, Andrew opened the Best Cafe, with the motto, "It's not only Good, It's the Best." Although John tried his luck with Beys Liquor Store in 1942, it soon collapsed, and he rejoined his brothers in the restaurant business. John retired for a while but re-opened Beys Liquor Store in 1949 which lasted for a few years. Andrew had closed the Best Cafe the year before and opened a new one, the Rock Hut Cafe, in 1949. Samuel died in 1950, but his wife, Helen, continued to run the Golden State Cafe which by now also included a hotel. Although John went back into retirement, Andrew remained in the cafe business until 1957. After that year, neither of the brothers was listed in city directories.
6. U. S. Census of Manufactures, 1931.
7. The last entry in the city directories for C. P. Nicholson as manager is 1944; Alkie is listed in that capacity in 1945.
8. EPCD 1958-1960.
9. Liberty Glass Company began its career as Pioneer Glass Company of Coffeyville, Kansas in 1903. In 1908 it was renamed Premium Glass Company and closed down two years later. A new Premium opened in Sapulpa, Oklahoma with George F. Collins as president. Collins joined with H. U. Bartlett in 1915 to combine Premium with Bartlett's plant to form Bartlett-Collins. One of Collins's relatives remained with Bartlett (Bartlett-Collins continues to manufacture glass products in 1995), but George separated and reconstituted the Sapulpa plant as Liberty Glass Company in 1918. Until about 1955, the company's slogan was "high grade milk bottles and carbonated beverage bottles exclusively" Julian Harrison Toulouse, *Bottle Makers and Their Marks*, New York (Thomas Nelson, 1971), 321-323.


Although Alkie never mentioned them, Nicholson's earliest bottles were purchased from the Three Rivers Glass Company of Three Rivers, Texas. The company manufactured glass containers from 1922 to 1937. Michael David Smith, *Texas Glass: An Illustrated History of the Three Rivers Glass Company 1922-1937*, New Braunfels, Texas (Atwood Printing, 1989), 49.
10. The Crown Cork & Seal Co. was first listed in the Telephone books in 1920 at 413 E. Boulevard (Yandell). City Directories did not include the company (with Western Stopper Co.—both at 1601 Magoffin Ave.) until 1938. In 1943, the name was changed to Western Crown Cork & Seal Co. and became the Crown Cork & Seal Co., Western Division in 1956. The company was last listed in the 1970 El Paso Telephone Directory. Crown caps and their accompanying cork seals were imported from the parent company rather than manufactured in El Paso.
11. Nicholson Interview.
12. El Paso City Directory, 1972-1979. El Paso City Directory, 1972-1979.





Map courtesy of M.B. Gross, El Paso, Texas.





# Georgetown Produced Millions in Silver, Then Quit

By Paxton P. Price



Georgetown, New Mexico, was located three miles west of the road leading to Mimbres. That made it eighteen miles northeast of Silver City. It is gone now. The Georgetown area lay in a porphyry dyke, a generous area of silver deposits. The congregation of miners prowling the surrounding mountains to find the riches reportedly attracted the raiding Warm Springs Apaches. Led by chiefs Victorio and Nana, the Indians rustled horses and cattle belonging to the miners, disturbing their peace and their production.

In 1866 prospectors named Britine, Streeter, George Duncan, and Andy Johnson discovered silver in the area before Georgetown existed. The Apaches, persistent marauders during those seven years, did not allow the miners to feel safe enough to do much looking for gold or silver in the area. It wasn't until 1873 that a "prospector rush" developed at the site. By 1875 a general prospector boom was raging. And during the rush, George Magruder had named the place after his hometown, the suburb Georgetown of the District of Columbia. An unusual monument made of solid silver ore graced the center of the townsite to indicate its mineral richness as a location—the miners had silver to spare. Nothing has been recorded about the monument's disappearance, but it has been claimed to have been standing as late as 1903.

Residents of Georgetown during the late 1870's had to be careful about where they stepped in order to avoid falling into a mine shaft. Several hundred mines closely dotted the landscape. Some years later it was claimed that the camp contained fifteen miles of underground mining tunnels. How a poor prospector discovered and developed a rich mineral lode is described in a diary



written and published by Henry B. Ailman. His was the principal producing mine in Georgetown. He experienced the typical fortunes of a prospector during the mining history of New Mexico. He chanced upon the earliest mining development under way in Georgetown.

After becoming rich from his mine production of several years, Ailman, with his partner Meredith, sold out to the local Mimbres Mining Company and moved to Silver City, where he went into business and established a bank. Misfortune overtook him there, bankrupting him and resulting in his moving to Los Angeles.

*With all the miners who had come to Georgetown to get rich, the camp quickly grew into a substantial settlement. Twelve hundred people were finally counted and Georgetown was bursting at the seams.*

Georgetown was too crowded with exploration holes and settlement abodes to allow the establishment there of a stamp mill to grind the ores. Thus, by 1878 two such mills had been located at Mimbres where power for the mills was provided by the flowing Mimbres River.

Ailman and Meredith's mine was called the Naiad Queen. It occupied 199.4 acres which proved to be covering the richest portion of the lode. By trading with discouraged miners who were abandoning the area, Ailman and Meredith acquired mines adjacent to the Naiad Queen. Near it was another good producer, the McGregor and McNulty property, owned by James Fresh and George McGruder and his brother John

who were the earliest Georgetown prospectors. The commercial mine was owned by Elijah Weiks and worked by forty miners. Before the camp folded after the fall in silver price, the Mimbres Mining Company owned a number of good mines: Satisfaction, Extension, McNulty, Uncle Sam, Low, Glamorgan and Hague.

With all the miners who had come to Georgetown to get rich, the camp quickly grew into a substantial settlement. Twelve hundred people were finally counted and Georgetown was bursting at the seams. Adobe homes were built indicating high hopes for an enduring future. It was a quiet and harmonious camp. The town grew up in three sections: central Georgetown was the business section; the southern district contained miners' cabins and shacks, saloons, bawdy houses and the jail, while northern Georgetown



had the better homes, churches, and the school. Someone had thought of zoning!

Commercially, the camp supported two sawmills, a brewery, and Dan Comer's livery stable. J. B. Adams owned the bakery. A Chinese restaurant did well. Kennedy and Tharp ran the drug store while Matt Kennedy held sway over the newstand. Jacob Helde owned the billiard parlor and Alley and McKee were wagon-builders.

How could a skating rink exist? It did—and there were several stores. The Georgetown Hotel took care of the travelers. The twenty saloons took care of some of the travelers and a good percentage of town folks. Those who were thirsty had a wide choice of bars to patronize. Dr. Thomas was the local "saw-bones." G. W. Holt was the county probate judge. Charles Bell administered learning at the camp's school.

As early as 1881 Lamar P. Davis began publishing the *Silver Brick*, the local newspaper. It evolved into another one called the *Courier* which lasted until 1884 with A. C. Lowery as editor.

Mrs. Magruder, wife of the man who named Georgetown, later earned some notoriety by hiding Billy the Kid in her closet when he was sought by authorities for his youthful escapades in Silver City. At times he even hid in the cemetery. Mimbres Valley nearby was the garden spot for all the general area settlements. Fresh produce such as chile, potatoes, and corn were in demand as cash crops. Sam Bean from La Mesilla, was reported to have grown fifteen thousand pounds of potatoes one year and hauled them to La Mesilla for sale.

It was long after his return to New Mexico in 1873, and settlement in the Mimbres area, that James A. Lucas from Missouri, renewed his reputation as a New Mexico secessionist. Early in his life in La Mesilla, where he was in business, and served in the first county government as well as in the territorial legislature, Lucas repeatedly led a Mesilla Valley movement to detach southern New Mexico and add it to Arizona to create a new territory. The scheme as a provisional state died by the end of the Civil War.

Ben St. Cyr ran the Georgetown stage coach to Silver City and it apparently escaped being held up by either Anglo-American robbers or Apache marauders at some place along its mountainous route. No holdup is recorded.



Entertainment in Georgetown was of the conventional kind current in its day. Married ladies and families were the prime movers in town. Picnics and basket suppers engaged the hungry and the romantic. Socials were held by every organization in

*An occasional wrongdoer would crop up as one did in 1890....*

*While he was being hustled off to jail he was "rescued" from the clutches of the law. "Rescuers" hung him and filled him with holes while he swung. They were out of patience and they restored the peace.*

camp. Cultural affairs took place too. Literature and dramatic societies staged presentations in some saloon, if need be. Those who didn't care for any of those mentioned above took to gambling. Some even drank in the always open saloons.

Life in Georgetown was not always innocent and pure. An occasional wrongdoer would crop up as one did in 1890. Whether he was under the evil influence of drink or not, he started random shooting in town. The local voluntary peace corps caught him after dodging his wild firing. While he was being hustled off to jail he was "rescued" from the clutches of the law. "Rescuers" hung him and filled him with holes while he swung. They were out of patience and they restored the peace.

Georgetown was an active mining camp for thirty years—proved by its summary production of \$3.5 million in silver ores. The federal 1893 law of silver demonetization killed Georgetown, as it did many other silver producing sites in the Territory. By 1903 the camp numbered only one hundred people—all that remained of the 1200 who had been there in 1888.

Georgetown, a century later, is as barren of human habitation as it was originally. Even the road leading to the old camp is now indistinct. The camp died after the coinage of silver was discontinued. But the camp accounted for a sizeable share of the value of silver minted in coins of the United States. In 1880, it reached the total of \$1.5 million.



**RAYTON PRICE**, the author of the recently published *Pioneers of the Mesilla Valley*, is a retired executive and Army officer. He spent his boyhood in Doña Ana County, attending public schools there. He attended New Mexico Military Institute and graduated from George Peabody College in Tennessee. Price who now resides in Las Vegas, New Mexico, completed his graduate work at Columbia University.

## SOURCES

- Page E. Christiansen**, *The Story of Mining in New Mexico* (Socorro, New Mexico: Bureau of Mines and Mineral Resources, 1974).
- Marion File**, *Directory of Mines in New Mexico* (Socorro, New Mexico: Bureau of Mines and Mineral Resources, 1965).
- Agnes A. Jones**, *Old Mining Camps of New Mexico* (Santa Fe, New Mexico: Stagecoach Press, 1964).
- Helen J. Lundwall**, ed. *Pioneering in Territorial Silver City: H. B. Ailman's Recollections of Silver City and the Southwest, 1871-1892* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1983).
- James E. Sherman and Barbara H. Sherman**, *Ghost Towns and Mining Camps of New Mexico* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1975).





**PAXTON PRICE**, the author of the recently published *Pioneers of the Mesilla Valley*, is a retired executive and Army officer. He spent his boyhood in Doña Ana County, attending public schools there. He attended New Mexico Military Institute and graduated from George Peabody College in Tennessee. Price who now resides in Las Vegas, New Mexico, completed his graduate work at Columbia University.

### SOURCES

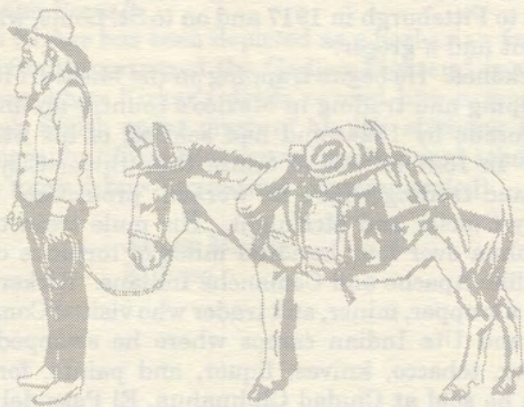
Paige E. Christiansen, *The Story of Mining in New Mexico* (Socorro, New Mexico: Bureau of Mines and Mineral Resources, 1974).

Lucien File, *Directory of Mines in New Mexico* (Socorro, New Mexico: Bureau of Mines and Mineral Resources, 1965).

Fayette A. Jones, *Old Mining Camps of New Mexico* (Santa Fe, New Mexico: Stagecoach Press, 1964).

Helen J. Lundwall, ed. *Pioneering in Territorial Silver City: H. B. Ailman's Recollections of Silver City and the Southwest, 1871-1892* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1983).

James E. Sherman and Barbara H. Sherman, *Ghost Towns and Mining Camps of New Mexico* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1975).



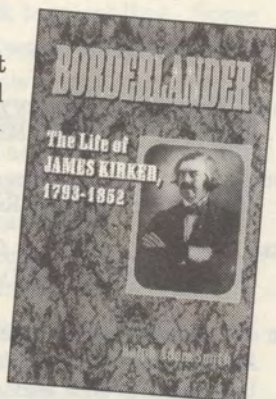




## Book Reviews

**BORDERLANDER: THE LIFE OF JAMES KIRKER, 1793-1852**  
by Ralph Adam Smith. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1999. 326 pp. ISBN 0-8061-3041-5

When Dr. Ralph Smith died in 1998, he left a legacy of scholarship. He never presented a bad paper at a scholarly meeting or published a bad article. If you were on the same program with him, you always wanted to be first because he always left his audience thinking. He was a hard act to follow. Ralph Smith was a scholar! His book on James Kirker proves it. Smith spent nearly fifty years studying the subject, and he has dissected it from every angle imaginable. His style is lucid, interesting. The subject of taking scalps for pay is fascinating, even if repugnant by present day standards. But that is Smith's point: Kirker, the best known of all scalp hunters in the Southwest, must be judged by the standards of his day.



Born in Ireland, Kirker landed in New York harbor in 1810. He was a privateer in the War of 1812 and was captured by the British off the coast of Brazil. Released, he returned to New York where he married Catherine Dunigan and became a grocer. He could not stay settled so he went to Pittsburgh in 1817 and on to St. Louis, where he became a merchant and a grocer.

The West beckoned. He began trapping on the Missouri River in 1822; he was trapping and trading in Mexico's country around Taos and southern Colorado by 1824; and had sold all of his St. Louis property in 1825. In 1827 he was at Santa Rita (Silver City), New Mexico trapping and trading where he worked "protection" for the mines operated by Cuicier and McKnight. His mule train trekked to Ciudad Chihuahua over four hundred miles of tortuous country infested with warlike Apache and Comanche Indians. Kirker persevered. He became a trapper, miner, and trader who visited Comanche, Apache, Navajo, and Ute Indian camps where he swapped cloth, guns, lead, powder, tobacco, knives, liquor, and paints, for silver and mules, which he sold at Ciudad Chihuahua, El Paso del Norte, Socorro, Santa Fe, Taos, Santa Rita, and Bent's Fort. Kirker was a traveling merchant. 1831 was the year of change, for that year heralded the "war" between the Apache and the Mexicans, which



began when a Mexican named Arredondo beat Apache Chief Juan Jose Compa. A deadly hostility ensued which lasted until 1891, when the Apache were exterminated.

Most of the book explains Kirker's involvement in this war. Apache and Comanche Indians from the United States raided frequently into northern Mexico, killing, raping, and plundering. The Mexican government tried to provide for their own defense, but were unsuccessful. The government of Chihuahua then turned to offering a bounty on scalps of Indians, and they signed five contracts with James Kirker for him to deliver scalps. He became Don Santiago Kirker, raised an army which included Americans, Mexicans, and Shawnee Indians—an army which raided Comanche and Apache camps and collected scalps which they delivered to Ciudad Chihuahua. The process became known as “quirquismo” because it was mercenary. Kirker was so successful that the Chihuahua government had trouble paying his bounty. Then, Kirker petitioned for his pay and eventually went to war against the Mexicans. He served as a scout for Alexander Doniphan's expedition into Mexico during the United States-Mexico War of 1846–1848. He aided substantially in the battle at Sacramento outside Ciudad Chihuahua which enabled the Americans to capture the city.

By 1850, Kirker was living near Clayton, California, just north of Mount Diablo. In December 1852, at the age of fifty nine, he was found dead in his cabin. Kirker left a legacy of violence and two families whom he had abandoned. Catherine and one son lived in New York, and Rita Garcia and five children resided in El Paso Del Norte, Chihuahua (today's Ciudad Juárez) and Mesilla. His oldest daughter Petra married Samuel G. Bean, who became sheriff of Doña Ana County, New Mexico and who was a brother to Roy Bean, the eccentric “Law West of the Pecos.”

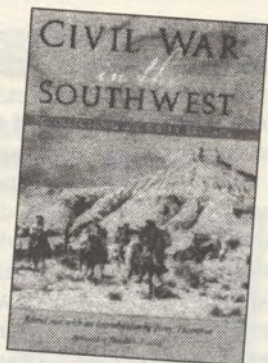
Although Kirker has been depicted as a barbarian for his scalping activities, Smith portrayed the “Indian Fighters” in the light of their own times when Kirker's deeds earned him a reputation for bravery. Ralph Smith spent much of his life studying Kirker and writing his biography. This book is well written and scholarly solid. The subject is morbid but fascinating. Recommended!

James M. Day  
El Paso



**CIVIL WAR IN THE SOUTHWEST: RECOLLECTIONS OF THE SIBLEY BRIGADE** Edited by Jerry Thompson. College Station: Texas A&M University Press 256 pp. + 5 maps + Bibliography + Index + Appendix. Cloth, \$24.95

Until recently little attention was paid to the Civil War in the Southwest. Ken Burns, in his epic television documentary, made no mention of this aspect of the war. Since the 1980s, however, Jerry Thompson, dean of the College of Arts and Sciences and professor of history at Texas A&M International University, with a few others, have done their best to correct this omission. In 1987 Thompson published a biography of Henry Hopkins Sibley, the Confederate general who led a brigade of young Texans into New Mexico to bring that Union territory under Confederate control.



Now Thompson has edited and annotated the recollections of seven members of that brigade which were first published as a series of articles in an east Texas newspaper over one hundred years ago. Half of the eighteen episodes were written by William Davidson, whose goal was to publish these recollections in book form. For whatever reason, the book was never published and the articles remained "lost" for over a century. Then, in 1988, a graduate student at Texas Christian University was made aware of the newspaper and the Sibley Brigade articles. Actually, the newspaper, the *Overton Sharp-Shooter*, had been microfilmed years earlier by the Center for American History at the University of Texas. Now, thanks to Thompson, they are more readily available to historians of the war in the Southwest.

This volume, then, is mainly of interest to historians. Thompson has done a masterful job of correcting errors of fact, many of which could be expected considering the articles were written almost thirty years after the events described. The recollections cover every aspect of the Sibley campaign, from San Antonio to Franklin (modern El Paso) to northern New Mexico and back, with Thompson providing context all along the way. The account of most interest to local enthusiasts describes the failure of leading Franklin secessionists James Magoffin and Simeon Hart to provide enough foodstuffs which were to be obtained in Chihuahua to sustain the campaign into New Mexico.

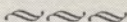
The recollections describe the hardships, successes, and failures of the Sibley Brigade, attributing the latter mainly to General Sibley himself. As Davidson wrote: "It's true we fought some desperate battles, won every fight, and killed many of the enemy, but we never reaped the fruits of a single victory, and for this somebody is heavily to blame . . . . Let future generations lay the blame where it belongs—on the shoulders of General Sibley."



And what if Sibley had been a better general and, even more importantly, less of a drunkard? He was inebriated most of the time, even during battle. What was the Confederate objective in capturing New Mexico in 1861? Many of the Texans believed they were destined for Missouri "through the back door." But to Thompson, after conquering New Mexico and signing on more of the Southern sympathizers who were thought mistakenly to be living there, Sibley's army would then move into Colorado and eventually march west to California. A Confederate Manifest Destiny would thus be fulfilled, doubling the size of the Confederacy and creating a continental nation stretching from Richmond to San Francisco. This would make English and French recognition of the Confederate States more likely and would in turn give the Confederate States of America more chance to succeed.

One final point overlooked by Thompson: while the conquest of New Mexico and Colorado was certainly within the realm of possibility, the conquest of California, with few Confederate sympathizers and hundreds of miles to the west, was highly unlikely. But, the invasion of the Southwest and California would no doubt have led to the transfer of more Union divisions to the west, thereby affecting the outcome of the eastern battles and campaigns. Perhaps Union forces would have been spread so thinly across the continent that the South could have achieved its primary objective: recognition of an independent Confederate States of America by the United States.

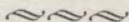
Harvey Plaut  
EPCC History



*Password* volume 46, no. 4, Winter 2001

Because of an editorial oversight, the biographical information that should have accompanied the article "An Early History of the Mesilla Valley and its Mercantile Community" was omitted. It is herein printed with apologies to Scott Edward Fritz, the author of that article.

SCOTT EDWARD FRITZ *studied the history of Asia and world religions at the University of California at Santa Cruz from which he graduated in 1991. His graduate studies were pursued at New Mexico State University where he concentrated on the history of the Southwest merchants and the Santa Fe trade. Scott wishes to acknowledge the editorial assistance of Dr. Darliss Miller.*







## OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS 2002 THE EL PASO COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

President	Carolyn Breck
First Vice President	Hughes Butterworth
Second Vice President	Mike Hutson
Third Vice President	Jack Niland
Recording Secretary	Betty Jean Phillips
Corresponding Secretary	Suzanne Hubbard
Treasurer	Lee Haskin
Historian	Amy Paschich
Membership	Mary Carmen Saucedo
Curator, Jane Burges Perrenot	
Research Center	Barbara Rees
Administrative Assistant	Lynn Russell

### MEMBERS EX-OFFICIO

Editor, PASSWORD	Marilyn C. Gross
Editor, EL CONQUISTADOR	Patricia Worthington
Chair, Burges House Commission	Lea Vail
Program Chairman	Carolyn Drapes
Director, El Paso Museum of History	René Harris
Tour of Homes Chairmen	Sharon & Hughes Butterworth
Hall of Honor Banquet	Lisa McAlmon Brown
	Carlie Pine
Hall of Honor Selection Committee	Ward Koehler
Immediate Past President	Frank McKnight

### DIRECTORS

2000-2002	2001-2003	2002-2004
Sally Borrett	Francis "Skip" Broadus	Leigh Bloss
Lisa McAlmon Brown	Wilma Hudson	Carolyn Drapes
Jessie Gore	Dee Hunsicker	Eleanor Goodman
Carlie Pine	Dorr Miller	Joyce Graves
Sue Ramsey	Carolyn Ponsford	Jack McGrath
Edward Schwartz	Nancy Wyler	Rose Peinado
Jackie Williams	Mike Torres	Bill McKinnon

**ALL PAST PRESIDENTS ARE HONORARY BOARD MEMBERS**



# Corporate Sponsors

*Continued from inside front cover.*

## **MITHOFF, BURTON PARTNERS**

4105 Rio Bravo, Suite 100  
El Paso, TX 79902  
915-544-9400

## **ENRIQUE MORENO, ATTORNEY AT LAW**

701 Magoffin Avenue  
El Paso, TX 79901  
915-533-9977

## **NILAND COMPANY**

320 North Clark Drive  
El Paso, TX 79905  
915-799-1405

## **OESTE HOMES CUSTOM BUILDERS**

465-D North Resler  
El Paso, TX 79912  
915-581-6303

## **PDX PRINTING**

100 Porfirio Diaz  
El Paso, TX 79902  
915-544-6688

## **SHUNDO BALLROOM DANCE STUDIO**

2719 North Stanton  
El Paso, TX 79902  
915-532-2043

## **SIERRA MEDICAL CENTER**

1625 Medical Center Drive  
El Paso, TX 79902  
915-747-4000

## **WELLS FARGO BANK TEXAS, N.A.**

221 North Kansas  
El Paso, TX 79901  
915-532-9922

For information concerning the submission of an article to **PASSWORD**, please contact:  
Marilyn Gross, editor  
5133 Orleans, El Paso, Texas 79924  
(915) 755-7329 • Email: [mcgross@prodigy.net](mailto:mcgross@prodigy.net)

The per-copy price of **PASSWORD** is \$7.50 for copies from 1980 to the present.

The price of copies of **PASSWORD** for 1956 to 1979 is \$10.00.

Cost of postage and handling is \$2.00 for one issue, \$1.00 for each additional issue.

Correspondence regarding **back numbers, defective copies,**  
and **changes of address** should be addressed to:

Membership Secretary, El Paso County Historical Society, P.O. Box 28, El Paso, Texas  
79940. Society Membership of \$30.00 per year includes a subscription to **PASSWORD**.

**PASSWORD** (ISSN 0031-2738) is published quarterly by  
THE EL PASO COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY, 603 W. Yandell, El Paso, Texas 79902

Periodicals Postage Paid at El Paso, Texas

**POSTMASTER: Send address changes to**  
**PASSWORD**

The El Paso County Historical Society  
P.O. Box 28 • El Paso, Texas 79940