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L. D. Hicks took this photo of El Paso “sunners” at San Jacinto Plaza in 1909, looking east with Mills Street on the right. Note the Ornsdorff Hotel in the background, with the open verandas favored by pulmonary patients. “This Plaza is daily filled with people, mostly from the North, who come here to mend their lungs,” wrote Rudolf Eichemeyer in Letters from the Southwest (New York: J. J. Little & Co., 1894, p. 8). “Lungers, they call them here for short.” Photo courtesy of the El Paso Public Library.

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“C” is for Climate: El Paso as a Health Resort, 1880-1940

By Mark Cioc-Ortega

The prosperity of El Paso once rested on the four C’s of the local economy: copper, cattle, cotton, and climate. The first three are easy to grasp. “Copper” is shorthand for the two major ore smelters, Asarco and Nichols, which directly and indirectly employed thousands of local workers. “Cattle” refers to the central role that El Paso once played in the Mexican cattle market and also to the former presence of national and local meat-packing companies such as Armour, Swift, and Peyton. “Cotton” alludes to the high-quality acala and pima varieties that long dominated the county’s agricultural fields. The meaning of “climate,” however, is less clear. Today we tend to assume it stands for sunshine, but a century ago it stood for health.

Medical climatology is now a long-forgotten and debunked theory, but it was popular among physicians during the 19th century. Doctors knew from long experience that people who lived in lush rainy regions at lower elevations were much more susceptible to coughs and fevers than people who lived in high, dry, and sparsely vegetated climes. They theorized that diseases oozed from the “miasmatic” soils and swampy “vapours” of bottomlands and that the afflicted could be “cured” by moving to a higher and drier location. Even after Robert Koch, Louis Pasteur, and other microbiologists introduced the germ theory of disease in the 1860s, climatotherapy remained a popular “cure.” It would not fall fully out of favor until the widespread introduction of antibiotics in the first half of the twentieth century.

Climatotherapy was especially popular among physicians who treated tuberculosis. Known to the ancient Greeks as phthisis...
In July 1892 the State of Texas granted the Daughters of Charity a charter to establish Hotel Dieu in El Paso "to receive the sick, the helpless and the afflicted, to nurse and care for them, to alleviate their pain and suffering and to restore them as far as possible to health." The Daughters established an affiliated School of Nursing in 1898. Prominent among the hospital's patients in the early decades were tuberculosis sufferers. Photo courtesy of UTEP Special Collections.

("wasting away"), tuberculosis was a worldwide scourge and one of the leading causes of premature death in Europe and the United States in the 19th century. It was commonly called "consumption" (because the disease seemed to consume the human body) and less commonly as the "white death," "great white plague," or "white swelling" (because white tubercles formed in the infected tissues). Sufferers were nicknamed "consumptives," "tuberculards," "coughers," "pukers," "lungers," and "one lungers" (until his death in April 1910, Willey Watson Whitmyer wrote for the El Paso Herald under the pseudonym "Wun Lung"). Tuberculosis was so prevalent in the Euro-American world—affecting one of every seven persons and accounting for about 80 percent of all pulmonary cases—that it permeated all aspects of social and cultural life. Giuseppe Verdi's "La Traviata" (1853) and Giacomo Puccini's "La Bohème" (1896) are the best known tubercular operas, while Thomas Mann's Magic Mountain (1924) is the world's most famous tubercular novel.
Tuberculosis's characteristic symptoms—a persistent cough, a bloody sputum, chest pain, high fever, severe weight loss, night sweats—made it easy to spot in its advanced stages. The path to early diagnosis and effective treatment, however, was long and twisted. The German physician Hermann Brehmer (1826-1889) is widely regarded as the first modern tuberculosis researcher. Diagnosed with tuberculosis in his youth, he moved to the Himalayas for a climate cure, returning to Germany once he became disease-free. After completing his medical degree at Humboldt University in Berlin (where he wrote a paper on "Tuberculosis as a Curable Disease"), he established the world's first tuberculosis sanatorium in 1854 in the mountain village of Görbersdorf, Germany (now Sokolowsko, Poland). His sanatorium "cure"—fresh air, good nutrition, and rest—gradually became popular around the globe, including the American West. A second breakthrough came in 1882, when the German bacteriologist Robert Koch (1843-1910) identified Mycobacterium tuberculosis as the bacillus that caused the disease. Koch's research not only proved that tuberculosis was an infectious disease (a contested view until then) but also suggested that it was potentially preventable through a vaccine or curable through drug therapy. The final breakthrough came in 1943 when the Ukranian-American Selman A. Waksman (1888-1973) and his graduate student Albert Schatz (1920-2005) developed streptomycin in a Rutgers University laboratory. It was the first of many antibiotics that would prove capable of killing the tuberculosis bacillus.²

El Paso's heyday as a tuberculosis center lasted from the 1880s to the 1940s, roughly corresponding to the span of time between when Koch identified the tuberculosis-causing bacillus and when Waksman's lab developed the first effective cure.

El Paso as a Health Resort

El Paso emerged as a major center for the treatment of tuberculosis and other pulmonary diseases for a variety of interrelated reasons. It was one of the largest and most important western cities at a time when medical climatologists considered the American West (defined as everything west of the Mississippi) to be a superbly healthful region. It had the high elevation (nearly 4000 feet), sparse vegetation, and sunny dry climate that sanatorium proponents favored. It was easy to reach via rail from any direction in the U.S. or Mexico. And it contained an abundance of local
FOUR THOUSAND CONSUMPTIVES STARVE YEARLY.

Many Indigent Dying Cases are Being Sent to Southwest.

The following is taken from the press service of the National Association for the Study and Prevention of Tuberculosis.

"The old idea that consumption could be most successfully treated in the high, dry regions of the southwest is an exploded one.

"It is true that when a patient is allowed to remain among friends and relatives the element of cheerfulness and satisfaction, and with home surroundings, is of decided value in the cure of a case.

"Cruel and inhuman practices are alleged by the National Association for the Study and Prevention of Tuberculosis against eastern doctors who persist in sending dying cases of consumption to the southwest.

"Fully 7,130 persons hopelessly diseased with tuberculosis annually come to die in the states of California, Arizona, New Mexico, Texas and Colorado, most of them by order of their physicians. At least 60 per cent of these advanced cases are so poor that they have not sufficient means to provide for the poorer necessities of life, which means that 4,315 consumptives are either starved to death, or forced to accept charitable relief every year.

"It costs, on an average, at least fifty dollars per month for the support of a consumptive in the southwest, including some medical attention."

By the early 1900s, El Paso had become inundated with indigent tubercular patients from the eastern states. This warning, published by the El Paso Board of Health in March 1910 states in part: "Cruel and inhuman practices are alleged by the National Association for the Study and Prevention of Tuberculosis against eastern doctors who persist in sending dying cases of consumption to the southwest.... It costs, on an average, at least fifty dollars per month for the support of a consumptive in the southwest, including some medical attention." Photo courtesy of El Paso County Historical Society.
doctors and business boosters who were eager to foster, and profit from, the city's reputation as "nature's sanatorium."3

The American West enjoyed an exaggerated reputation as a health paradise in large part because the Mississippi region had a well-deserved reputation as a disease hellhole. Easterners who immigrated to the Mississippi basin settled on land that was extraordinarily fertile and teeming with game, but which also harbored malaria, cholera, dysentery, yellow fever, and many other maladies. Those who continued their trek westward to the high plains of the Rocky Mountains settled on land that was arid and infertile but also remarkably free of chronic and life-threatening diseases. Today we know that the Mississippi basin harbored more microorganisms, parasites, and other disease carriers (mosquitoes, flies, lice, ticks, worms, etc.) than did the American West; but at the time people blamed the climate.4

Popular writers contributed heavily to the image of the American West as a land of health and opportunity. Josiah Gregg, author of the best-selling Commerce of the Prairies (1844), was a tubercular whose health was restored while traveling to Santa Fe in the early 1830s. "Salubrity of climate is decidedly the most interesting feature in the character of New Mexico," he wrote. "Bilious diseases—the great scourge of the valley of the Mississippi—are here almost unknown." Daniel Drake, author of the authoritative A Systematic Treaties, Historical, Etiological, and Practical, on the Principal Diseases of the Interior Valley of North America (1850), told readers to get healthy by "wandering in the desert west of the Mississippi" and "descending the valley of the Rio del Norte [Rio Grande] to the luscious vineyards of the El Paso." And Frederick Law Olmstead, author of A Journey Through Texas: A Saddle Trip on the Southwestern Frontier (1860) stated: "To a pulmonary invalid, who can throw off cares, and who has any recuperative elasticity in him, I can recommend nothing more healthy than a winter's ride...upon the Texan prairies."5

Colorado became the first western state to advertise itself as a pulmonary paradise and Denver was home to several prominent members of the American Climatological Society (organized in 1884). But California, Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and Nevada were not far behind. Western towns along the main rail lines were best suited to foster tubercular communities, in part because the railroads offered ease of travel but also because the railroads actively promoted therapeutic tourism. Regions that could boast
having all or most of the key healthful climatological features—high, dry, and sparse—also had an edge. That is why Denver, Santa Fe, Tucson, San Antonio, and El Paso could compete with San Diego and Los Angeles as major health resorts. "I never sat in a south or west bound train in Texas that I did not note some consumptive who journeyed toward the dry plains with hope and good prospect of regaining his lost heritage of health," wrote W. H. Taylor in 1879.6

Doctors differed among themselves as to the best location to send their patients. Many preferred the Colorado Rockies because it resembled the Swiss Alps, where Europe's most-renowned sanatoria were located. Others sent their patients to the southwest border region (between the 32 and 35 degrees latitude) because it was warm, dry, and sunny there for most of the year. Still other doctors prescribed different cures for different symptoms, sending some of their patients to the mountains and others to the desert.7 "I had personal experience in all the following health resorts, a good deal in some and little in others," recalled Dr. Earl Bullock, a tuberculosis patient from New York, who was sent westward in search of a cure and who later himself became a tubercular physician: "Denver, Colorado Springs, Fort Collins, and Pueblo, in Colorado; Raton, Las Vegas, Santa Fe, Albuquerque, Deming, Fort Bayard, Las Cruces, and Silver City, in New Mexico; Phoenix and Tucson, in Arizona; and El Paso, in Texas."8

Some of El Paso's earliest Anglo residents, notably Josiah Crosby, came in search of pulmonary cures, but it was only after the rail lines arrived in 1881 that local boosters began to advertise the city's health virtues nationwide. "Sunshine prevails almost constantly, and there are none of the distressing fogs elsewhere encountered," wrote the City Physician, Charles Race, in what is undoubtedly the town's first tuberculosis brochure, El Paso, Texas, as a Health Resort (1884): "Nowhere on the continent are witness- ed such magnificent and varied sunsets, which can be seen almost the entire year. Days 'dark and cold and dreary' are seldom seen." El Paso, he claimed, offered the perfect combination of virtues for optimum health: "Intermediate geographical location and elevation above sea level. An abundant supply of pure water. A perfect drainage. A temperature without fault; the heat of summer moderated by frequent showers and cooling breezes, with the nights always cool and refreshing, and an autumn, winter, and spring with invigorating temperature. An atmosphere wholly free from
deleterious elements and of medium humidity. Wholesome food in variety and quality to meet every desire or necessity, and served properly and palatably. Hotels and dwellings designed tastefully and possessed of apartments and surroundings with view to every hygienic requirement: the rooms large, well ventilated, perfectly heated and comfortably furnished, and the surroundings cleanly and neat.”

W. M. Yandell, the El Paso Health Officer, was nearly as exuberant in his report to the El Paso city council, *El Paso, Texas, as a Winter Health Resort* (1888): “El Paso has, in common with southern New Mexico and southern Arizona, the best winter climate in the United States for consumptives, and the same holds good for asthmatics and persons suffering from other chronic pulmonary diseases.” He did, however, caution against the city’s summer heat: “To invalids in search of ‘dry, warm air’ in daytime, cool or cold bracing nights with rare excessive cold, moderate winds, cloudless skies, considerable but not excessive altitude, absence of malaria, and in fact, speaking from personal observation, an almost perfect climate, I confidently recommend El Paso from the middle of September to the middle of May, camping out in the mountains of New
Mexico after that time.”¹⁰ Conspicuously missing from Yandell’s depiction was any mention of El Paso’s springtime dust storms.

Meanwhile, the El Paso County Medical Society (organized in 1888) did its part by encouraging physicians across the country to send their patients to the city. “The majority of us, through tubercular disease existing in ourselves or some member of our families, have selected El Paso as a point presenting the greatest number of features in eradicating phthisis in its various forms,” stated one of their medical pamphlets, El Paso, Texas. A Story of Sunshine (1905): “Many of us have markedly improved, since arriving here, others are, to all intents and purposes, free from the original trouble previously existing in selves or loved ones.... El Paso’s low relative humidity, its absence of extremes of heat and cold, its year round climate, its low number of rainy, cloudy days, the small amount of rainfall, the electrical conditions, living expenses, moderate taxes, absence of northerns, are the chief features that we presume will be of interest to you.”¹¹

This boosterism paid off: between 1890 and 1920, around 25,000 persons moved to El Paso in search of pulmonary miracles. While this was only a small fraction of the estimated 750,000 invalids who headed west in search of a health cure between 1870 and 1900 (Denver alone had 30,000 consumptives in 1890), it was

Long Sanatorium, built in 1920 at 2827 Louisiana Avenue, was one of many private tuberculosis clinics in El Paso. Photo courtesy of UTEP Special Collections.
sufficient to put El Paso on the tuberculosis map. A public survey by the U.S. Public Health Service in 1913 revealed that half the residents of El Paso, Albuquerque, Tucson, Denver, Colorado Springs, and Pasadena had moved to these cities because they or a grandparent, parent, or sibling suffered from a chronic pulmonary disease. El Paso alone reported having 4000 consumptives in 1913, nearly 9 percent of its total 47,000 population. "There is not a town in that entire western region in which the population has not been materially increased, the business life advanced, and growth furthered by the coming of these people," concluded Ernest Sweet, the U.S. Public Health Service physician, in 1915: "Were all the consumptives to leave, the population of El Paso would undoubtedly decrease by over 12,000, Albuquerque would dwindle to half its present size, and Silver City would become a mere spot in the desert."

**El Paso's Hospitals and Sanatoria**

Unfortunately, El Paso was ill-prepared for the influx of tuberculosis patients, especially in the early years when the town lacked modern medical facilities. Well-to-do sufferers found refuge in hotels and boarding houses, but the penniless had the choice of going to the County Hospital (a glorified pest house) or pitching their tents on the sun-baked slopes of Mount Franklin. Samuel Solly, one of America's most renowned medical climatologists, remarked in 1897 that El Paso had only one acceptable hotel, the Vendome (later called the Orndorff): "The climate is superb. It is in the details of living that the visitor is most liable to meet with disappointment."

In 1892, the Ladies Benevolent Society established a short-lived "Ladies Hospital," but it could only handle a small proportion of indigent tuberculars. A bigger step was taken when the Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul completed Hotel Dieu ("the Catholic Sanatorium") in 1895, which included a wing with 50 beds for tuberculars. Between July 1895 and August 1901 alone, Hotel Dieu admitted 512 tuberculars, almost twenty percent of its total admissions, nearly all of them out-of-towners. The opening of the Hotel Excelsior, St. Luke's, and Providence Hospital between 1900 and 1902 added more hospital beds (not necessarily for tuberculars) in El Paso. Then came the Woman's Charity Association in 1903 (the nucleus of the Associated Charities, created in 1915) to aid women and children in distress, including tuberculars. One of
Many El Pasoans celebrated the city's sunny weather in song and verse. This is the cover for H. W. Austin and Sylvia M. Austin's score sheet "El Paso: Where Sunshine Spends the Winter."

Photo courtesy of El Paso County Historical Society.
its primary tasks was to care for those who lived in tents around Mt. Franklin. Between 1908 and 1910, local volunteers also ran the United El Paso Consumptive Relief Association (later renamed the El Paso Health League), which not only cared for the needs of Anglo and Mexican invalids but also focused on hygiene and preventive measures. It disbanded when Dr. Hugh White began running a free clinic in the County Courthouse.¹⁶

City council, meanwhile, experimented with a variety of responses. For indigents who could still travel, the city shelled out the money for one-way rail tickets to return them to their former homes or some other city. For those too sick to travel, the city sometimes paid for their stay at Hotel Dieu but more often sent them to the County Hospital or the County Poor Farm. The city also introduced a number of prophylactic measures designed to protect the local population from becoming infected. These included a prohibition on spitting in public places, periodic “clean ups” of the ethnic Mexican neighborhoods in South El Paso (the Segundo Barrio and Chihuahuita).¹⁷

Despite these efforts, El Paso could still only house a fraction of the estimated 1500 to 2000 tuberculars that were arriving each year, let alone do much to restore their health. According to the City Health Officer in 1906, 90 percent of El Paso’s consumptives were out-of-towners: “In 100 recorded deaths, 54 of the deceased had resided in El Paso less than a year; 14 showed a residence of 3 years; 5 showed a residence of less than one day; 3 died in the trains in the railroad yards without medical aid; 42 were embalmed and shipped back to various states; 18 were buried as paupers.”¹⁸ Small wonder that Will Ross, one of El Paso's many recent health seekers, noted in 1908 that many of the town's “most pretentious buildings” were funeral parlors.¹⁹ Far too many Easterners were rushing westward to regain their health, only to meet the undertaker instead.

El Paso’s public-health situation began to improve gradually as the 20th century progressed. To begin with, by now the germ theory of disease had largely supplanted climatotherapy: the focus of medical research was shifting away from therapeutic travel and toward vaccines and pharmaceutical cures. Private and public sanatoria were becoming the preferred mode of accommodation, as were well-managed cottage-and-tent communities. The goal of these sanatoria and tent communities was to provide adequate health care in a semi-isolated environment in order to
This graph from the Twelfth Census of the United States (1900): Statistical Atlas, Plate 112, suggests that tuberculosis (consumption) accounted for 11-12 percent of all disease-related deaths in the U.S. between 1890 and 1900.

minimize the chances for contagion. As a sign of the times, the National Association for the Study and Prevention of Tuberculosis (now the American Lung Association) was established in 1904 as a counterbalance to the American Climatological Society. It was spearheaded by Dr. Edward Livingston Trudeau, who built America’s first European-style sanatorium at Saranac Lake, New York, in 1884. “The old idea that consumption could be most successfully treated in the high, dry regions of the southwest is an exploded one,” the Association stated in one of its first official reports: “Fully 7,180 persons hopelessly diseased with tuberculosis annually come to die in the states of California, Arizona, New Mexico, Texas and Colorado, most of them by order of their physicians. At least 60 per cent of these advanced cases are so poor that they have no sufficient means to provide for the poorer necessaries of life, which means that 4,315 consumptives are either starved to death, or forced to accept charitable relief every year.”

Many doctors in the American West continued to advertise the virtues of high dry climates, but their claims now fell on less gullible ears. Meanwhile, many eastern doc-
tors—under pressure from federal health officials—quit sending their most hopeless cases westward in search of miracles.21

El Paso's first private sanatorium, the Albert Baldwin Health Resort, at 1901 Grandview, opened in 1907. It was built by David C. Baldwin, a New Orleans consumptive who had come to El Paso for his health, and was named after his father. It became the Homan Sanatorium in 1910 and the St. Joseph Sanatorium after that. Charles M. Hendrick, the first medical director at Baldwin, opened up his own facility, the Hendricks-Laws Sanatorium, at 2700 Marr Street, in 1914. Hendricks introduced the bilateral artificial pneumothorax device to the El Paso community. Invented in 1882 by the Italian Carlo Forlanini, the pneumothorax collapsed a patient's lung, allowing it to rest; it was considered at the time (incorrectly) as a major therapeutic breakthrough. Other early sanatoria include the El Paso Sanatorium (originally spelled Sanitarium) at 1109 Cotton, which later became the Annie Laurie Home; the Convalescent Home for Tuberculosis at 2401 Copia, which later became the Wiley Sanatorium, then the Gammons Sanatorium, and finally the Idle Rest Convalescent Home; and the Sunncrest Sanatorium at 2431 Tremont. By the 1920s, the city also housed the Long Sanatorium at 2827 Louisiana Street, Finn's Sanatorium at 2701 Louisville (which soon became Sellers Sanatorium), the Southern Baptist Sanatorium on Alamogordo Road, and the Price Sanatorium at 2729 Porter (which later became the Fordyce Sanatorium and then the Mesa Sanatorium). City, county, and federal authorities also contributed to the housing of tuberculars. El Paso's new City-County Hospital, which opened in 1915, had a wing devoted to pulmonary and other infectious diseases; and William Beaumont Army Medical Center, which opened in 1921, specialized in tubercular soldiers.22

Not all tuberculars could afford the cost of private sanatoria ($50 to $100 per month) or find space in public facilities; these patients found a niche in tent-and-cottage communities on the outskirts of the city limits. These communities were a throwback to the days of climatotherapy, but the National Tuberculosis Association sanctioned them nonetheless—as long as the tents were spacious and proper medical care was near at hand—because they offered affordable housing while isolating the infected from the non-infected.23 The sunny southeastern slopes of Mt. Franklin housed El Paso's largest tent-and-cottage community, with Highland Park as its epicenter. "There were times," recalled Chris P.
Fox, "when that area of the mountain was veritably covered with white canvas topped wall tents, the size depending up the number in the family.... Those tents had floors and sides of wood, as well as generous numbers of guyropes and stake loops. The canvas skirts of the tents were well made, so they could be tightly staked through the rock and caliche. The warming Sibley stove was always placed in the center of the tent so that the chimney would go out to the side of the centerpole. Some of the people would build outdoor fireplaces which made clothes boiling and cooking less difficult. The stoves burned mesquite wood brought to the tents on the back of burros." Water, schools, and transportation were serious problems until the city created the infrastructure (Fannin, Lamar, and Austin schools, the Highland Park streetcar line, etc.) that allowed for a more pleasant and permanent residency. "The Highland Park area," Fox noted, "if you look at it today, is still made up of many, many small homes. Many were built and owned by some of the tubercular people of another day. They had sufficient funds to build a house and stay away from the rigors of tent living." 24

In her delightful memoir, Where the Creosote Blooms (1999), Mary King Rodge fondly remembers spending the 1920s as a child on Mountain Avenue, on the outskirts of the tent-and-cottage neighborhood (her family even received a black kitten named Witty as a present from a nearby tubercular girl). 25 But not all El Pasoans shared Mary’s serene acceptance of this tubercular community. When Dr. Asa Brunson tried to establish a new sanatorium at the corner of Portland and Dakota in 1925, he met with stiff resistance from nearby property owners and residents. "First, it is a menace to the health and general welfare of our people, making our district less desirable for homes," they wrote in a petition to city council: "Second, this proposed site is in a thickly populated district, within a few blocks of the Fannin and Austin Schools. Our children would have to pass this Sanatorium to and from school and it would be very depressing on the young lives of many of them. Third, a Tubercular Sanatorium erected in a residential district lowers the valuation of property, making it harder to sell and to rent." City council ended up denying Brunson a building permit, even though many of the city’s existing sanatoria were clustered in this same general area. "The Mayor and Council are opposed to the further location of sanitariums for contagious diseases in more or less thickly populated resident districts," the City Clerk explained. 26
Small cottages were often used to house tuberculosis patients. These are part of St. Joseph’s Sanatorium. Photo courtesy of El Paso Public Library.

The source of public anxiety is not hard to find. Although the mortality rates from tuberculosis dropped in El Paso during the first half of the twentieth century, the city always lagged far behind the national average: circa 750 deaths per 100,000 in 1910 (nearly 5 times the national average), 608 deaths per 100,000 in 1920 (over 5 times the national average), 301 deaths per 100,000 in 1930 (over 4 times the national average), and 116 deaths per 100,000 in 1940 (more than twice the national average). More alarming still was the fact that tubercular deaths among Anglo whites was dropping faster than deaths among ethnic Mexicans, many of whom had less access to modern sanitation and medical care. According to a city health survey in 1915, 90 percent of El Paso’s white population lived in “decent, sanitary and habitable” homes, but the vast majority of ethnic Mexicans lived under “deplorable and insanitary” conditions. Although city officials lurched from one controversial “clean up” campaign to the next, revealing their racialized world view in the process, South El Paso continued to lag behind the rest of the city in terms of public sanitation. As late as 1930, white mortality rates from tuberculosis still exceeded “Mexican” mortality rates (306 per 100,000 as opposed to 230 per 100,000). But by 1936, the El Paso Herald grimly reported that the tuberculosis mortality rates in South El Paso exceeded that of immigrant
"health seekers" (119 per 100,000 versus 88 per 100,000) and also that the death rate among Spanish speakers in El Paso was more than three times that of non-Spanish speakers (229 per 100,000 as opposed to 64 out of 100,000). Similarly, in the early 1920s ethnic Mexicans accounted for around 50 percent of the Associated Charities tuberculosis cases, but by 1930 they were accounting for 75 percent. The tuberculosis bacillus had migrated with the health seekers and lodged itself in the lungs of the city's underclass.

Conclusion

The American West's image as a pulmonary paradise is now largely forgotten. It came to an end during the 1940s with the development of streptomycin and other antibiotics that were effective against tuberculosis. El Paso was among the more popular destinations for health seekers, as can be seen from the number of public and private medical facilities that were built to accommodate them, especially during the 1910-1930 period. In 1900, the city directory listed just two hospitals in the city: Hotel Dieu and the County Hospital (pest house). In 1910, it listed 8 hospitals and sanatoria; in 1920, 14; and in 1930, 12. As late as 1940, El Paso still had five facilities that included the word "sanatorium" in their name. By 1950 there were only three.
All economic activities have a negative side, and El Paso's C's were no exception. Copper smelters were major polluters of the region's air and soil. The cattle-and-meatpacking industry could generate a horrendous stench. Cotton consumed vast quantities of Rio Grande water and competed with alfalfa, hay, chilies, and grapes for agricultural space. None of these drawbacks, however, was as problematic as the fourth C. There was an almost religious belief in the curative power of sunshine and dry heat, so much so that sufferers were willing to travel enormous distances to find a place in the sun. Though El Pasoans welcomed the influx at first, they increasingly began to weigh the pluses and minuses of housing so many tuberculars. On the positive side, the climate cure provided livelihoods for many local physicians, nurses, hospitals, hotels, and railroads; attracted thousands of therapeutic travelers who (if they survived) often stayed and contributed to the betterment of the city; and transformed El Paso into one of the southwest's premier medical centers. On the negative side, it exposed healthy locals and immigrants to a contagious and life-threatening disease; created tensions between public health officials and private physicians; and placed a heavy financial burden on local governments and private charities.

Medical climatologists were half right: the American West was relatively free of tuberculosis and other pulmonary maladies in the early 19th century. What they did not realize was that the "health seekers" carried the infection with them as they journeyed westward, thus expanding the tubercular frontier and exposing westerners to infection. "C" stood for climate, but it could just as easily have stood for "consumption," "contagion," and "cemetery."

*This is the front porch of the El Paso Sanatorium, which opened in 1910 at 1109 Cotton. A young girl and an adult male are convalescing in the fresh air as a nurse stands by. Medical climatologists considered fresh air an essential part of the tubercular "cure." Photo courtesy of El Paso Public Library.*
ENDNOTES

1. A fifth “C” was added after 1945, “clothing,” in reference to the days when Farah and other major pant manufacturers had their headquarters in El Paso.

2. For a complete history of tuberculosis, see Thomas Dormandy, The White Death: A History of Tuberculosis (New York: New York University Press, 1999); Sheila M. Rothman, Living in the Shadow of Death: Tuberculosis and the Social Experience of Illness in American History (New York: Basic Books, 1994); and Rene Dubos and Jean Dubos, The White Plague: Tuberculosis, Man, and Society (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1987). The term “sanatorium” (from the Latin sanare, “to heal”) was once used primarily to describe an institution designed for the long-term treatment of pulmonary diseases through diet, rest, and fresh air. The similar sounding “sanitarium” (from the Latin sanitus, “health”) was more broadly used to describe a health resort that focused on recovery through diet and exercise. Today the terms are virtually interchangeable. I have used sanatorium in this essay because of its historical connection to tuberculosis.


5. Jones, Health-Seekers in the Southwest, pp. 40-41, 60-61, and 86.


13. Rothman, Living in the Shadow of Death, p. 132. This population estimate is plausible because the 1910 census puts El Paso’s population at 39,279 and the 1920 census at 77,560.

18. Smith, Texas Tuberculosis Highlights, p. 5. The quote is from Smith based on the City Health Officer’s data.
20. The association’s report was republished in Report: Department of Health, El Paso, Texas, March 1910, El Paso County History Society Archives (087-1980-0049). El Paso’s chapter of the National Tuberculosis Association was created as an offshoot of the Associated Charities in 1929.
30. Price, “Tuberculosis in West Texas,” p. 188.
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2. First National Bank
3. Fort Bliss
4. First Pictures of UTEP
5. The original court house
6. The Carnegie Library
7. The Plaza with snow
8. Fort Bliss at La Noria Mesa
9. Fred Feldman photograph of the flood of 1897

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The Hendricks Sanatorium
A Modern Institution for the Treatment of Tuberculosis

The facility opened in 1914. This is a reprint of 25 select pages from a facility brochure.
THE HENDRICKS SANATORIUM
EL PASO, TEXAS

ROBERT D. HARVEY
PRESIDENT

F. S. LITTLEJOHN
ASSISTANT PHYSICIAN

C. M. HENDRICKS
MEDICAL DIRECTOR

A MODERN INSTITUTION
FOR THE TREATMENT OF TUBERCULOSIS
THE SANATORIUM

In the conception, building and equipment of this institution, it has been the earnest endeavor to realize the ideal from the standpoint of the patient. There are many institutions in many climates but after deliberate study and many years experience, it was decided to build this institution in El Paso.

That the sanatorium is the proper place to send tuberculous patients, no longer is denied. The question is, "What Sanatorium?" In our opinion, the answer should be, "To an institution in a mild climate and a moderate altitude; an institution in which the patient will receive scientific treatment and supervision, and where, above all, the patient will have the creature comforts of his own home, that he may be happy and contented."

The sanatorium is located under the brow of the mesa, east of the city, adjoining Fort Bliss, commanding a wonderful view of the city, the valley, and the Rocky Mountains. The sanatorium is of fire proof construction and contains fifty-three rooms, seven rooms having private baths, the balance of the rooms being arranged with the bath between each two rooms. All rooms have private sleeping porches, running hot and cold water, steam heat and electric lights.

A few of the other features of the sanatorium include refrigerating and ice plant, private pumping plant, and nurse's call button service.
The arrangement of all rooms. Private sleeping porch, bath, and running hot and cold water. Thermos bottles, reading lamps and bed-side tables.
One of the thirty-six Bath Rooms.

A completely equipped Barber Shop
The Patio. A cool and comfortable lounging place.
A cheerful, well ventilated and completely equipped Dining Room.
A sanitary and completely equipped Kitchen.
Showing dish washing machines, sterilizers and dish warmer.
AS IT ever occurred to us that our tuberculous patients have but a few weeks after a very early diagnosis in which to begin their attempt at cure? A tuberculous case with constitutional symptoms well established, must obtain the arrest of his disease during the first few months of his illness or join the class of chronic invalids.

From an economic standpoint then, he must begin as soon as the diagnosis is made. Not in a hap-hazard way—a boarding house and a visit now and then to his physician, etc., but in a scientific way, under the daily personal attention of men trained in this work. He must be comfortable, he must have good food, his surroundings and associations must be pleasant. It is better to spend $1,000.00 in the beginning and have all the patient should have, than to spend the thousand dollars, as he eventually will, and merely prolong his invalidism.
Library.
One of the two Sun Parlors.
Treatment Room. The medical department contains modern equipment for the treatment of the nose and throat. Also for the administration of the Pneumo-Thorax treatment.
THE CITY

EL PASO is the largest and most progressive city in the southwest; it is the largest port of entry into Mexico; it is the natural distributing point over an area extending five hundred miles in every direction. Most of the gold, silver and copper imported into the United States passes through El Paso's Custom House. El Paso has more miles of paved streets than any city its size in the United States; also more automobiles per capita. El Paso has the largest custom smelter, the largest reinforced concrete office building, the largest dairy, the largest wood finishing mill, of any city in the world.

This city is growing rapidly and has more than trebled in population during the past ten years. This rapid and remarkable growth is due to the fact that the climate brings, each year, more and more people in search of health and who, upon recovery, seeing the vast opportunities, remain and are developing the hitherto untouched resources.
Part of the business section of El Paso.
Rear view of the Sanatorium showing the Rocky Mountains in the distance.
A part of the residence section of El Paso—One of the paved country drives.
Fort Bliss. One of the large United States Army Posts. Band concerts and Army Maneuvers are daily features. The Sanatorium is adjacent to this Post.
El Paso Dairy. The largest dairy in the world supplying milk and cream direct to the consumer. This dairy supplies the Sanatorium with milk, cream and buttermilk.
THE CLIMATE

HE OLD, old question of climate: "Does it have an influence? Can't your patient do as well at home?" It is true, patients arrive at cures in any climate. Some patients get well of any disease often without medical attention but results count in every instance.

No one who is fair minded can say that altitude and dry air have no influence. El Paso's climate is famous, the world over, with its extreme dryness and prevailing northwest winds (east in summer), thus giving this city every possible climatic advantage for health and comfort. The absence of humidity tempers the summer's heat and the winter's cold. El Paso's altitude, (4,000 feet), is moderate: enough to give the tonic effect, to influence the blood changes and to bring the blood pressure nearer its normal without increasing the strain on the heart and producing shortness of breath, so often noticed in the higher altitudes. Moderation describes El Paso's climate and altitude.
A typical street scene, Juarez, Mexico, across the Rio Grande river from El Paso.
In Memoriam

MARIAN ZORK GIVEN
1923–2012

Long time Executive Director of the
El Paso Child Guidance Center
A Hannah G. Solomon award winner
Named First Lady of El Paso in 1988
A volunteer for Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts,
El Paso Mental Health/Mental Retardation,
National Council of Jewish Women,
Thomason General Hospital, and several PTA's.

Corrections

Volume 56, No. 3
Please add the following title to the Table of Contents:
Preservation and Picnics During the Early Years
of the El Paso Pioneer Association, 1904-1911
By Mark Cioc-Ortega and Evelina Ortega

Volume 56, No. 4
Please correct the title for the following paper:
"Think-Talk-Write Texas Centennial in 1936":
Historical Memory and the Texas Centennial
in El Paso and the Border Region
By Abbie Weiser
Hall of Honor Nominations

The El Paso County Historical Society accepts nominations from the general public as well as from Society members for the Hall of Honor. One living and one or two deceased persons will be remembered and honored at the Society's annual banquet in November. Nominations may be made for one or both categories. Nominees must be (1) outstanding men or women of character, vision, courage and creative spirit who have lived in what is presently El Paso County, (2) who have consistently done the unusual which deserves to be written or recorded, or who have created that which deserves to be read, heard, or seen, and who have made El Paso County better for their having lived in it; and (3) who have influenced over a period of years the course of history of El Paso County, or by their singular achievements have brought honor and recognition to the El Paso community, and (4) who have directed us toward worthy goals and merit being remembered by all El Pasoans as an exemplary guide to our future.

All nominations must be accompanied by a biographical resume that includes pertinent information about the nominee and the reasons for nominating him or her. Please include the nominee's address and phone number if living, date of death if deceased, date and place of birth, years of residence in El Paso County, profession, and name and address of nearest known relative(s). The person making the nomination must give his or her name and phone number and mail all information to Chairman, Hall of Honor Selection Committee, El Paso County Historical Society, P.O. Box 28, El Paso, Texas 79940 by July 1 of each year.

HALL OF HONOR NOMINATION FORM

LIVING NOMINEE:

Name ____________________________
Address (including zip code) ____________________________

Birthplace ____________________________ Years Residence in El Paso ________ Profession ________

Nearest Relative ____________________________ Address ____________________________

DECEASED NOMINEE:

Name ____________________________

Place and Date of Birth ____________________________ Date and Place of Death ____________________________

Years of Residence in El Paso County ________ Profession ________

Nearest Living Relative or Close Friend ____________________________ Phone No. ____________________________

Address (including zip code) ____________________________

NOMINATOR:

Name ____________________________

Phone No. ____________________________ Date ____________________________
Lecturas

Recent Books about the Southwest

Arnn, John Wesley III. Land of the Tejas: Native American Identity and Interaction in Texas, A.D. 1300 to 1700. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2012. [Although this book covers Native Americans in all of Texas, it includes a lot about the groups that inhabited or traveled through far West Texas. Dense and with much technical data gleaned from archaeological research, it also cites many early archival sources from French and Spanish explorers.]

Barry, Tom. Border Wars. Boston, MA: MIT Press, 2011. [More a book on policy than on history, this book by an investigative journalist reveals much of the economics and politics behind the private prisons that have appeared on the landscape in many small Texas and New Mexico communities, and exposes some of the inhume treatment that the inmates—many of whose only crime was being the U.S. without documents—must suffer.]

Grace & Gumption: The Women of El Paso. Marcia Hatfield Daudistel, editor. Fort Worth, TX: TCU Press, 2011. [With chapters penned by thirteen different authors, this book documents the contributions that women in many fields made to El Paso.]

Hendricks, Rick. The Casads: A Pioneer Family of the Mesilla Valley. Los Ranchos, NM: Rio Grande Books, 2012. [A detailed study of a family that moved to the Las Cruces area after a convoluted migration that took them from Ohio to Illinois, Missouri, Kansas, California, and finally to the Mesilla Valley of southern New Mexico.]

Kiser, William S. Turmoil on the Rio Grande: The Territorial History of the Mesilla Valley, 1846-1865. College Station, TX: Texas A&M Press, 2011. [This history concentrates on events in southern New Mexico during the early territorial period and the Civil War. With many of the sources culled from government documents, much of the emphasis is on military and political matters, but it gives a rather comprehensive overview of the history of the region during the period covered.]

Levario, Miguel Antonio. Militarizing the Border: When Mexicans Became the Enemy. College Station, TX: Texas A&M Press, 2012. [Focusing on the period between 1895 and 1940, the author examines the history of the relationship among law enforcement, military, civil, and political institutions, and local communities. Much of the book’s analysis relates to El Paso.]
The Plazas of New Mexico. Edited by Chris Wilson and Stefanos Polysoides, photography by Miguel Gandert, Trinity University Press, 2011. [Much more than a picture book, this volume gives historical background to the forms that plazas take in New Mexico and how different cultures shaped their use; it is illustrated with photographs, maps, and drawings.]

Woods, Fred E. Finding Refuge in El Paso: The 1912 Mormon Exodus from Mexico. Springfield, UT: Cedar Fort Publishing & Media, 2012. [Based in large part on oral history interviews and first-person accounts, this book is accompanied by a DVD with a documentary about the Mormon colonists settling around Casas Grandes, Chihuahua, and why they had to flee during the Mexican Revolution.]
El Paso County Historical Society

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El Paso County Historical Society

• EVENTS •

Officers and Board of Directors meet the first Tuesday of each month (except July and August) at 11:30 am at Burges House, 603 W. Yandell.

General meetings (open to the public) are held in February, May, August and October.

Election of officers and directors is held at the October meeting. Exact dates, times, places and other pertinent information concerning all activities are announced in our newsletter, El Conquistador, which is published approximately fourteen days prior to each general meeting.

Other activities:
• Hall of Honor Banquet
• Frank W. Gorman Memorial Historical Essay Contest
• Karl P. and Helen P. Goodman Memorial Awards
• Dolly Dingle's Tea Party

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ORGANIZED MARCH 18, 1954

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