



ELPASOHISTORY.COM

El Conquistador

Spring 2016



El Paso County Historical Society

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Welcome to our new e-newsletter!

We are very happy to introduce our inaugural electronic edition of El Conquistador. In an institution steeped in history and proud tradition we are pleased to announce our drive towards technical modernization. Over the past two years there have been a number of advancements at the Historical Society. We will tell you a little bit about them in this issue.

As for El Conquistador, it has been resurrected in the form of an electronic newsletter. It will be emailed quarterly to our membership and be available at www.elpasohistory.com/conquistador.

El Paso County Historical Society 2016 Board of Directors

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We are grateful for the hardworking board members, committee members, and volunteers we have at the Historical Society. There is always work to be done, from the Burges House to our archives to the events we proudly participate in such as History Day and Hall of Honor. These endeavors take time and effort and simply would be unmanageable without the assistance of such fine people.

Since 1954, the El Paso County Historical Society has amassed and protected articles of history from our region. Since that time we have become renown as a research center. Our founding members shared a vision in preserving our heritage and 62 years later we are continuing the mission. There can be no doubt that this is a worthy investment where we can take pride in our accomplishments and take heart that our amazing past will not be forgotten.

President's Message



Greetings!

I am very pleased to tell you that we are experiencing the fruits of our efforts made in recent years and of work that continues here at the Burges House. To illustrate we have completed the digital conversion to a new database known as Past Perfect. This data management system is the industry standard for nearly 10,000 museums. We are now methodically going through our entire collection and comparing it to both the original database and the actual physical collection itself. This exacting and laborious effort will allow us to further document, rediscover, and ultimately audit our remarkable treasures.

Additionally, we recently brought up our new website, elpasohistory.com. We feel confident that it will help to more effectively inform and intrigue our viewers as well as generate new interest in the Historical Society. Our new website will allow us to share our collection with the world; unfettered to our members, and commercially to non-members. In regard to the latter of the two – we hope that we can fulfill their curiosities for a nominal fee, or better yet make members of them. Either way the Society benefits!

The El Paso County Historical Society is a distinguished organization that is in many ways unrivaled. With effort, participation, and innovation we are continuing our six-decade-long tradition of preserving, educating and promoting El Paso's history.

Sincerely,

Jim Fashing, 2016 President – El Paso County
Historical Society

Past Perfect

Past Perfect is a comprehensive database management system designed for museums. It is full featured in that it handles collections, members, volunteers, donations, and provides for a web presence. We converted our previous database to Past Perfect and have begun to systematically go through our archives, item by item. This will be a lengthy process and once completed we will have the Society's complete collection digitized and ready to share with the world and our members will be able to peruse our collection online. Past Perfect is just one of the projects we have committed to in an effort to modernize the Society and better serve our community.

New Website

We recently unveiled our new website at www.elpasohistory.com. We aspire to be able to serve our community (and the world) from this new site. From our site you will be able to view our collection, learn about scheduled events, visit our online store, order printed copies of our photographs and have them mailed directly to you, link to other websites of partnering organizations, and continue to do research and learn about our fascinating history. Our website also links to our Facebook page which is another way we are trying to keep the community engaged. Social media is an undeniable phenomenon and it is imperative that we harness this technology in order to engage the next generation of El Pasoans.

Information Technology

The Historical Society has made a number of sweeping improvements in the past two years, specifically in regards to its computer system. Hardware has been updated as well as operating systems and office software. We have also run network cabling throughout the Burges House to address some wireless hiccups we had encountered. Our server was relocated to Archives where it will remain cool and in good company. We are very appreciative for the in-house assistance from the I.T. and Burges House committees. We've been able to achieve these upgrades and improvements without any labor costs. Specifically I would like to thank our I.T. Chair, Mr. Mike Martin, for his extraordinary handling of our I.T. infrastructure.

Pass Word Digitization

The Historical Society possesses so many incredible treasures from our past. This year we celebrate the 60th anniversary of our beloved Pass Word. Within the approximate 240 volumes (and still growing) lies El Paso's history. From gun fighters to political upheaval to unparalleled philanthropy – the stories are real and this rich history belongs to all of us. One of the reasons we have worked so hard to improve our technology is to be able to make this scholarly publication available over the Internet. This year we allow members access to the complete collection of Pass Word articles.

Burges House

Our headquarters, the venerable Burges House, was built in 1912 for Richard F. Burges. There she has sat in the heart of Mesa Gardens (which is now Sunset Heights) for 104 years. There are always projects underway at the Burges House. In recent years we've addressed the front columns, the side patio and the driveway. We started this year off with a small water issue in the living room ceiling. We also rebuilt the rock wall in the back yard complete with new footings and an extra foot to its height. Next we will address the wall along the driveway. We also envision capital projects to build an amphitheater in the back yard for outdoor lectures/events and to enhance the rear entrance under ADA guidelines.

Our Finance Committee is working on structuring dedicated endowment funds that will ensure that our house and our mission will continue in perpetuity.

We are very fortunate to have such an amazing place to house our headquarters and collection. The Burges family has made an indelible impact on El Paso over the past century. Mr. Burges' great-grandson, Bill Hooten, continues to serve on the board of the Society as well as keeping the grounds in tip-top shape. Bill is a master gardener and we are surely the envy of the neighborhood!

We are not makers of history. We are
made by history.

Martin Luther King, Jr.



2015 Hall of Honor Recipients

Dee Margo

Dee Margo moved to El Paso in 1977, six months after marrying Adair at age 25, to work for John D. Williams Insurance Company as a straight commission salesman – a second-generation firm run by C. W. “Wake” Wakefield, his father-in-law. He rose to meet the challenge, buying the five-employee firm from his mother-in-law. Over thirty years the firm grew to be largest El Paso insurance firm, and among the top 150 in the United States. In 2013 the firm sold to HUB International of Chicago, which wanted to replicate the culture Dee had nourished.

While building a company, Dee also helped build El Paso – starting the Fellowship of Christian Athletes in 1977 with a UTEP football coach. In seeking to become a better president, he joined the Young President's Organization, gaining experience from the presidents of worldwide companies. In 1989 Dee helped found the El Paso-Juarez chapter, becoming its first Chapter Chair and – after joining the International board of YPO – he was named Chairman of the Executive committee of YPO International. He has also brought resources, founding the Border Fund with friend Dick Behrenhausen, who headed the McCormick Tribune Foundation in Chicago. Over thirteen years, the Border Fund provided over \$26 million in charitable grants to local not for profit groups. Dee continues Operation Noel in partnership with HUB International Insurance, the El Paso Times, KVIA Channel 7, and Mattress Firm – providing 20,000 coats and 18,000 pairs of shoes to needy El Paso children from toddlers to 12 years old at Christmas time. Dee was also involved in numerous other El Paso civic organizations such as Rotary, United Way, EP City-county board of Health, Greater EP Chamber of commerce (Chair 2005), Symphony, Boy Scouts, Junior Achievement (named to their business Hall of Fame with his wife Adair), and other groups.

Dee was appointed by Senator Phil Gramm as Civilian Aide to the Secretary of the Army, serving as a liaison between El Paso and Fort Bliss from 1990 – 1998. He also played an instrumental role in El Paso's advocacy for Fort Bliss during BRAC (Base Realignment and closure) in 2005, resulting in its exponential growth.

Dee and Adair have two sons, Wake and Don, a daughter-on-law, Elizabeth, and two granddaughters, Lilliana and Emma. They also have “adopted” daughter, Monica Gonzales, and her three girls: Sophia, Anna and Camilla.



Mary and Ernest Ponce

Ernest (1913-2002) and Mary Ponce (1915-2009)

Ernest Ponce was born in Chihuahua, Mexico on July 25, 1913. His father was an accountant for the Terrazas family, who at the time were one of the largest cattle barons in the country. In October of 1913, three month old Ernest Ponce and his family were forced to leave their home when Pancho Villa and his men attacked the Terrazas family compound. The family moved to El Paso, TX. Ernest loved El Paso and its people. He devoted countless volunteer hours to improve the quality of life in his beloved city. In 1951 he became the first Hispanic city councilman. Ernie's services to his community included working as the director of the Valley bank of El Paso. He served as a member of the Downtown Rotary Club, director of the Chamber of Commerce, president of Defense Supply Association, Commissioner of the North Texas-Oklahoma Export Expansion Council, Trustee with the City of El Paso Employee's Pension board, the League of Texas Municipalities, director of the YMCA, the United Fund, the Optimist Club, Selective Service board, National Conference of Christians and Jews, Our Lady's Youth Center, and the International Good Neighbor Council.

In the early 1960s Mr. Ponce played a key role in the negotiations and translations involving both the Chamizal Tract and Cordova Island. Ernie Ponce was the owner and operator of R-F Macaroni Co., Inc. which he sold in 1978. He was the El Paso YMCA Handball Champion from 1938-1951. Due to WWII the sport was inactive from 1942-1945. In 1946 Ernie was the YMCA Singles Champion until 1951 when he retired his position. In appreciation to the YMCA for helping him excel in sports as a young boy, Ernie succeeded in raising funds to build the YMCA located on Montana St. An avid sportsman, Ernie was also inducted in to the Golf Hall of Fame in 1997, an honor he greatly cherished. He also served as president of the El Paso Country Club, the West Texas-New Mexico Senior Golf Association, and Inner City Group. Ernie Ponce played and promoted sports and displayed good sportsmanship since he was a young boy and continued to do so until his death.

Mary S. Ponce was born in New York City. In her early teens her family moved to El Paso and made it their permanent home. She was also a tireless civic leader and is remembered for her outstanding contributions to the city and county of El Paso.

For more than 55 years Mary volunteered her time and energy in humanitarian and civic affairs. She was the director of the Woman's Department of the Greater El Paso Chamber of Commerce. She was also president of the El Paso Council of Garden Clubs. Mary served as a member of the advisory committees for three former El Paso mayors and directorships on numerous boards committed to the El Paso community. In 1967 she was voted El Paso Woman of the Year. She was also recognized in 1980 with the highest award given by the City of El Paso: the Conquistador Scroll. In addition to her civic activities, Mary served as Executive Regional Director of the El Paso Chapter of the national conference of Christians and Jews. In 1980 Mary and several Hispanic businessmen formed the Paso Del norte Broadcasting Corporation. They served as owners and operators of El Paso's only Hispanic television station Channel 26, KINT-TV, KSVE AM Radio, and KINT FM Radio. Mary was recognized as a founding partner in the El Paso Hispanic Endowment Fund established in 1995 for the University of Texas at El Paso.



Bill Rakocy

William Rakocy was born in Youngstown, Ohio on April 14, 1924. His interest in art sparked early. When he was a boy, not older than 7, a teacher gave him a note to deliver to his mother. It suggested she send him to art classes. His mother, Anna Mae, sent him to the Butler Art Institute where he studied well into his teens.

In 1943, William was drafted into the Navy and spent three years enlisted, including some time in the Philippines. He worked on recruitment training murals with historically based themes and sketched thousands of portraits of his fellow soldiers while overseas.

After returning stateside, he enrolled at the Kansas City Art Institute where he received both his bachelors of arts and masters of fine arts. While in school, he met Gloria Canterbury who soon became his wife, and they went on to have five children.

Over the next six decades, Rakocy worked for advertising agencies, as a film set designer, published an art newspaper, was fine arts chairman at the College of Artesia, New Mexico, taught art classes, including in El Paso and New Mexico, wrote twelve books about the southwest, settled and built an art studio in West El Paso, was Curator of Education at the El Paso Museum of Art, worked on the El Paso Museum of History and Wilderness Park Museum, worked with local artists such as Mario Parra and Manny Acosta, and participated in a variety of art shows in the southwest and throughout several states. Art was Rakocy's life, and he shared his life with others through his work. He was eager to show people his work and to teach up and coming students. He was adamant about sharing the southwest to people all over the country.



Nestor Valencia

Nestor Valencia is a native El Pasoan who knows what it means to improve and give back to a city. He was born and raised in Ysleta and graduated with a BA degree in Art, and later an M.A. in political science from the University of Texas at El Paso. Prior to this, he spent four years in the Air Force.

In 1958, Nestor began working for the city of El Paso. As a trained urban planner, he was instrumental in bringing about the Chamizal Settlement, the refurbishing of the Plaza Theater, and the Wyler Aerial Tramway. He is also a staunch advocate of the street car system, being fascinated with them since he and his mother traveled to Juarez in them in the 70s. He served as Vice President for Planning for the El Paso community Foundation as well.

He retired as Director of Planning for the City of El Paso and continues his work in art these days with his wife, Xochitil. He is a member of the Portrait Society of America and owns the Valencia Art Studio on 2113 W. O'Hara Road, Anthony, New Mexico.

Memorials & Honorariums

IN HONOR OF:

2015 Hall of Honor Recipients from Steven Brown and Lisa McAlmon

Dee Margo from Tim Floyd

Ernest and Mary Ponce from Jane Hoover

Javier Windle, Nestor Valencia from Chris Palafox

Javier Windle, Nestor Valencia from Margie Henderson

IN MEMORY OF:

Elizabeth Gillett from Hatfield H. Harris

Betty Smith Mary Goetting from Curtis Jaquelyn

Bruce G. Bixler from Joy Bixler

Carol Bertrand from Schmid, Broaddus, Nugent & Cano, P.C.

Carol Bertrand from Judy Crumley

Carol Bertrand from Harvey Development Co.

Carol Bertrand from Jim Fashing

Carol Bertrand from Trish and Robert Long

Carol Bertrand from Pat Worthington

Carol Bertrand from Jim Langford

Carol Bertrand from Judy Crumley

Carol Bertrand from Maureen & James Singleton

Crawford Kerr from Jack and Carroll Maxon

Elizabeth Gillett from Robert J. Sparks

Elizabeth Gillett from Jack and Carroll Maxon

Ernest and Mary Ponce from Steve Marsovich

Ernest and Mary Ponce from Vivion Collier

Ernest and Mary Ponce from Judy Bargman

Ernest and Mary Ponce from Bernarr Spence

Ernest and Mary Ponce from Carmen Lafarelle

Fred Harvey, Don Henderson from Chris Palafox

Fred Harvey, Don Henderson from Margie Henderson

Gary D. Smith from Vivian E. Smith

George McAlmon from Elizabeth McAlmon

Memorials & Honorariums

IN MEMORY OF (continued):

Gertrude (Sugar) Goodman from Joseph P. Hammond

John H. Ritchley, Baatan POW from Betty Ritchley

John Wilbanks from Mary R. Haynes

Joyce Palm from Jack and Carroll Maxon

Mary Etzold from Frank Gorman, Jr.

Nancy Sanders Wyler and Sugar Goodman from J.D. Jerry Gilmer

Ralph Hellums from Betty Wakefield

Ralph Hellums from William Leverton

Robert G. Neill, Jr. Mary Haynes

Sara McKnight from Leo Schuster, Jr.

Wallace M. Lowenfield from Mary Haynes

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