

# PASSWORD



THE EL PASO COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

---

VOL. VI - No. 1

WINTER, 1961

# P A S S W O R D

Published quarterly by THE EL PASO COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Vol. VI, No. 1

EL PASO, TEXAS

Winter, 1961

## C O N T E N T S

### *The President's Message*

By JOSEPH LEACH . . . . . 3

### *Recollections of Camp Cotton*

By ALBION SMITH . . . . . 5

### *Spanish and Mexican Surveying Terms and Systems*

By KATHERINE H. WHITE . . . . . 24

### *Book Reviews* . . . . . 28

SONNICHSEN, *Tularosa: Last of the Frontier West*  
— John Middagh

PERRIGO, *Our Spanish Southwest*  
— Alice D. Harvey

SPENCER, *Gold Country, 1828-1858*  
— Lillian Collingwood

*Contributors* . . . . . 33

*Historical Notes* . . . . . 35

Copyright 1961 by The El Paso County Historical Society

Address correspondence to P.O. Box 803, El Paso, Texas

---

## EDITORIAL STAFF

*Editor* . . . . . EUGENE O. PORTER  
*Associate Editor* . . . . . FRANK FEUILLE III  
*Assistant Editor* . . . . . JACK C. VOWELL, JR.  
*Book Editor* . . . . . MRS. PHYLLIS MAINZ

Correspondence in regard to articles for *PASSWORD* should be directed to  
DR. EUGENE O. PORTER, Texas Western College, El Paso, Texas.

All books and correspondence regarding Book Reviews should be sent to  
MRS. PHYLLIS MAINZ, 2512 San Diego, El Paso, Texas.

*PASSWORD* is distributed free of charge to members of  
the Society. It is *not* available to the general public.

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

Entered as second-class matter at the post office at  
El Paso, Texas, under the Act of August 24, 1912.

Printed at Texas Western College Press

CARL HERTZOG, *Director*

---

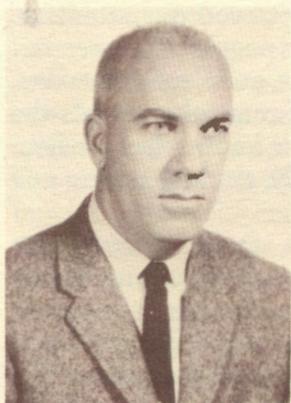
## PURPOSE OF THE SOCIETY

*To promote and engage in research into the  
History, Archeology, and Natural History of  
West Texas, Southern New Mexico, Eastern  
Arizona, and Northern Mexico; to publish  
the important findings; and to preserve the  
valuable relics and monuments.*

---

## THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

TO AN HISTORIAN, one of the most shocking—and most American—statements in all literature is the motto Carl Sandburg uses at the head of his “Four Preludes on Playthings of the Wind”: “The Past Is a Bucket of Ashes. Let the dead be dead.”



Fortunately, the El Paso Historical Society entertains no such notion. We are an organization keenly aware that past lives and past actions form the very stuff out of which our own lives and attitudes and experiences spring. To understand ourselves, we look to the past, knowing that it contains the clue to much of what we are and what we are to become.

But in this respect, we are special. El Paso, like most American communities, does not look to her past. She does not know or apparently care where she came from, and though El Paso is no less self-conscious, no less interested in her history than is any other American city of comparable size and twentieth-century vitality, we as members of this society know that in her dash for material progress, she is ignoring a heritage particularly worthy of notice, a heritage that if properly remembered and preserved could afford enrichment and direction to the lives of all her people.

Herein, it seems to me, lies our purpose for 1961. If our past is not to become, in Sandburg's words, a bucket of ashes buried under the shifting sand, we must reaffirm our determination to meet the challenge implicit in our name. The El Paso Historical Society carries a unique responsibility in this community. The preservation, the recording, the memorializing, the pointing-up of the treasure in our past: these are our business and our reason. This reason was never more vital than now. Unless we take a more active, even noisier leadership in these areas, we will have shirked our responsibility, and future Paseños who follow us through this happy place in the sun will find it less bright for our having passed through before them.

As your president I hope to lead you in important projects this year related to our overall theme. One such project is the El Paso Hall of Fame. Founding the Hall of Fame is a strikingly valuable step for us to be taking. I know that you will give it your fullest, most active support. Another such project is the Pass Monument. I look forward to a determined effort this year to build a suitable,

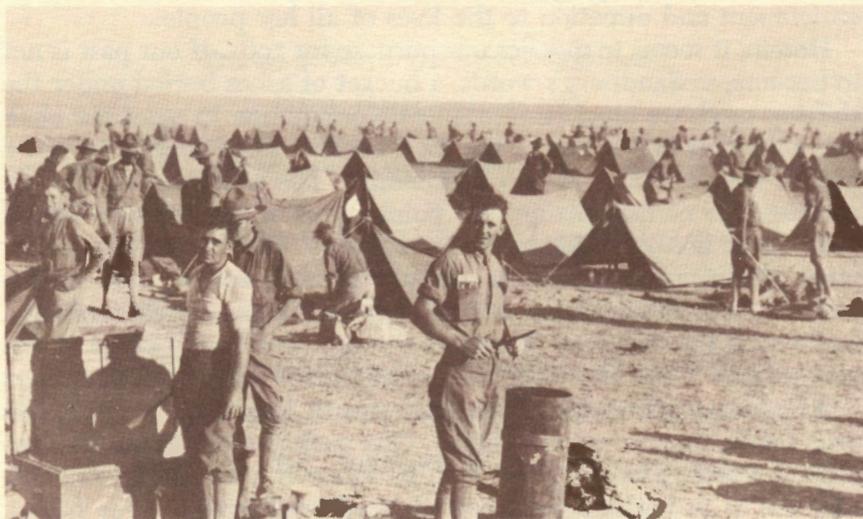
heroic memorial in the heart of the Pass. No place on this continent has carried more important footprints than has our own break in the mountains on the banks of our beloved Rio Grande. And no place, at present, looks less appreciated.

I mention the Hall of Fame and the Pass Monument simply as two examples of endeavors that have long deserved our attention. Undoubtedly, you know of others. You know people whose experiences we ought to record and publish in our excellent *PASSWORD*, you know buildings we ought to preserve, you remember events the rest of us have forgotten or never knew, you know places where history was made that will never be properly marked unless you give us your knowledge.

By pooling our information and our energies, we can progress into what any historical society should be, a truly *history-making* organization. Through our combined efforts we can broaden the whole framework of life in this community. We can rescue from oblivion much that is worthy, much that cannot be discarded as ashes. We can determine, in part at least, the pathway El Paso follows in its healthy march into time.

— JOSEPH LEACH

*Altman Collection (courtesy of El Paso Public Library)*



*National Guard troops pitching temporary camp of shelter tents near Bowie High School, Camp Cotton, 1916*

# RECOLLECTIONS OF CAMP COTTON

By ALBION SMITH

ON A CRISP MORNING *in* mid-October, 1916, ten trainloads of troops comprising the Georgia brigade of National Guard, enroute to El Paso, were strung out along the rails of the Texas and Pacific Railroad between Monahans and Sierra Blanca. One of those trains carried the 2nd Battalion, 5th Infantry, a regiment known to all as "Atlanta's Own," and within the battalion, which was comprised of Companies E, F, G and H, was E Company or the "Grady Cadets," in which I was the 2nd lieutenant. The brigade had been in training since June at Macon, Georgia, and now was enroute to the Mexican border at El Paso to assist in preventing incursions of Mexican partisan troops across the Río Grande onto Texas soil. In fact war had threatened to erupt between the United States and Mexico earlier in the year, but by October peaceful relations between the two countries had in a measure resumed, much to the disgust of the Georgia troops. Mexico had been in a state of turmoil since 1911 when the Madero Revolution against President Porfirio Díaz upset the tranquility of the Mexican people, and five years of warfare, accompanied by many changes of government had followed. American genius for backing the wrong horse in Latin-American politics, and for taking flimsy action when firmness and decision were required had brought about the feeling, in some quarters of Mexico, that the United States could be handled if necessary.

Pancho Villa, on the night of March 9, 1916, raided the small garrisoned town of Columbus, New Mexico and, in spite of the presence of the American garrison, committed arson, pillage, and murder, and escaped across the border into Mexico with light losses. Even now General Pershing, with a punitive force of some 6000 troops, was engaged in carrying out President Wilson's instructions to "Get Villa dead or alive." When this order became known along the border it met with derision and laughter everywhere for the reason that Villa, in a peon's costume, looked pretty much like thousands of others of that class. In fact, he might very easily have made a living selling produce to the invading Americans without any likelihood of detection.

Our Captain, William W. Dick, was a well trained officer, beloved by every man in the company. He was a graduate of the Citadel, and for several years past had been commandant at the Georgia Military Academy. Carl W. Wettersten, the first lieutenant, although

lacking in military background, was highly intelligent and aggressive. In civil life Carl was a salesman for Swift and Company and his knowledge of meat products was insurance of a good company mess during our stay on the border. As for me, I was a graduate of the Citadel, and had just returned from two years field service in the Philippine Constabulary. I had not been home long when the Mexican border problem became acute, and I accepted a commission in the Georgia National Guard out of friendship for Captain Dick. My job in the company was to take care of property and paper-work. The enlisted men or I should more properly say the volunteer soldiers of the company were a cross section of Atlanta's society. The great majority of them were under twenty years of age, gainfully employed in business and in many instances owned businesses of their own. All had volunteered to serve their country for no other motives than patriotism and a keen desire for battlefield service. Discipline was no problem; a quietly spoken rebuke was always enough to shame any violator of regulations, and I can recall with pride that no soldier was court-martialed in Company E during its entire stay on the border.

As our train approached El Paso everyone became intently interested in the landscape. Few if any of the battalion had ever been west of the Mississippi River, and none, with the exception of me, had been to El Paso. The prevalent growth of mesquite and creosote bush extended in all directions, finally merging with the blue mountains in the distance. This scene was quite different from the wooded Appalachian Mountains of Georgia, a fact that made the landscape doubly interesting. Everyone appreciated the difference in climate, which at this season was invigorating and dry; such a contrast to the sticky, humid climate of Georgia, in which for months past they had been drilling from dawn to dusk.

It was perhaps 10:00 A.M. when our train entered the railroad yards in El Paso, and after four calendar days aboard the troop train all of us welcomed the approaching end of the journey. There followed the endless backing, pulling ahead, teeth rattling stops, and backing again, which makes the frustrated passenger say to himself: "Why doesn't the engineer make up his mind?" Then at last the indecision came to an end, and the cars gained speed. Backing toward the south, along Laurel Street, the cars crossed Texas at the Lander Lumber Company and continued toward the Río Grande crossing what is now Paisano Drive, at the underpass, and in a short time came to a stop within 300 yards of the river. This was Camp Cotton; an area bounded by Cotton Avenue on the west; Paisano

Drive on the north; Cordova Island on the east; and the Río Grande on the south. If anyone was disappointed at the puny size of the Río Grande, he was too busy during the remainder of the day to mention it, because establishing a permanent camp involves a lot of work.

Our brigade, consisting of the 1st, 2nd, and 5th regiments, had taken over the camp site of the Massachusetts brigade consisting of the 5th, 8th and 9th infantry regiments, which now after many months on the border at El Paso were being removed. A small detachment remained to show us the area, and then entrained for duty elsewhere. Our baggage cars were opened soon after the troops detrained, and within an hour the tents marking the company streets were erected, and the kitchens, located at the head of the company streets gave off the pleasant odor of a meal being prepared. Everybody was busy; Captain Dick was receiving instructions from regimental headquarters, and transmitting them to the company; Wettersten was showing a green mess sergeant how to cut up a quarter of beef, and I was storing the company property in a tent provided for the purpose. With everyone doing his best we were soon at home or I should say as much at home as we were ever going to be.

It didn't take the Georgia boys long to find out that there were Yankees around. The only thing that separated the units of the Michigan division from the Georgia brigade was the slightly elevated railroad spur over which we had come, and this became a kind of Mason and Dixon Line. Some name calling and a few fights occurred before both parties tired of the profitless feud, and learned to settle their differences on the basis of mutual respect. Had the 5th Georgia known that a future secretary of war, Sergeant Wilber M. Brucker of the 33rd Michigan, was just across the tracks I am sure that they would have been more cordial.

The 5th Georgia had settled down to live in an area of caliche (a useless soil composed of calcium carbonate) and clay, which would have been a quagmire had it rained. But as there had been no rain recently, it was, instead, a field of dust, ankle deep. Our camp was arranged in such a manner that the company streets were perpendicular to the railroad spur over which we had arrived. A line of officers' tents, parallel to the spur, faced east in such a manner that the entire company street could be seen from the tent entrance. Company kitchens were separated from the officers' tents by a broad street, and were likewise tents. Each kitchen was provided with an incinerator made of brick, on top of which was imbedded

a large steel pan, into which all waste liquids were poured. In theory the liquid was evaporated by a fire underneath the incinerator, which also consumed solid garbage. Actually the scheme didn't work for a number of reasons; untrained troops could not be quickly taught to conserve the use of water, and only one-eighth of a cord of wood was allowed daily for the incinerator, which was too little to evaporate the amount of liquid that accumulated. I suspect that the liquid garbage found its way in buckets to the Río Grande each night; the solid garbage posed no problem. Between the kitchens and the company streets there was a service road over which supplies were delivered daily. Our company street, consisting of a dozen or more tents, was arranged in such a manner that the first sergeant's tent, marked by the guidon, was closest to the kitchen; next in line was the quartermaster store tent, and then followed those of the men, each tent housing a squad of eight. East of the company streets was the regimental drill field and parade ground, which was about 200 yards in width, and extended the full length of the regiment. Between the parade ground and the river there was a huge bath-house intended to serve the entire regiment, but actually few people used it because the water only ran in a trickle, and never seemed to get warm. I took one look at the place, which was filthy, and never returned during my stay on the border. Regimental headquarters, an assembly hall, and the guard tents, were situated to the north of the troop area, thus completing the arrangement of the camp.

Due to the dust everywhere it was impossible to keep anything clean. Within the tents dust rose in clouds whenever anyone walked. Enterprising soldiers collected scraps of lumber from crates, which they placed beneath the legs of the canvas cots, on which they slept and sat, and by so-doing prevented them sinking into the dusty soil. Lumber was not even provided for rifle racks, and in order to keep them moderately clean it was necessary to wrap them in cloth and suspend them by cords from the sides of the cots. The officers received no preferential treatment. Captain Dick was provided a small wall tent for his sole use, and Wettersten and I occupied a similar one together. Later we managed to obtain another so that each of us had a separate tent.

Heat was provided by Sibley stoves, a small conical device that resembled an oversized paper cup. A long pipe, to carry away smoke, passed through a vent in the top of the tent, and at the end of the pipe a spark arrestor was attached, but in spite of this precaution holes were frequently burned in the tents. On account of the strong

draft the fuel in the stoves burned fiercely for a few minutes, and then the tent became cold again.

Drinking water posed no problem. City water had been piped into the camp, and a tap near each company kitchen provided all of the clean water required. The kitchens and mess halls were, on the contrary, unsatisfactory. Food was stored in a tent, but to preserve perishable supplies one large refrigerator was provided each kitchen. There were neither floors nor screening, and for that reason insects were an omnipresent menace to health; likewise particles of food that fell on the bare floor of earth were concealed by the dust and remained to rot, unobserved.

Our battalion commander, Major Leahey, was respected and loved by every officer and soldier in the command. He was loyal to us and never in too big a hurry to stop and chat awhile. This quality, combined with his fine sense of humor, had much to do with the willingness of the men to undertake any assignment, no matter how difficult. Major Leahey was quite competent, having for years passed devoted his spare time to the study of military history and tactics as an avocation.

Colonel Orville H. Hall, affectionately referred to behind his back as "Olive H. Oil," commanded the regiment. He was a kind and patient man, not too well trained for his job, but he was bright enough to realize this deficiency, and asked to have Captain Robert Beck, a Regular, assigned to the regiment as instructor and executive officer with the rank of lieutenant-colonel. This was the smartest thing Hall ever did, because Beck was an outstanding officer, who never let anything go wrong, and steered the regiment along a safe and efficient path. Later he became a brigadier-general, and served with the 1st Cavalry Division.

Captain Gerald O'Keefe, Commander of Company F, had the reputation of being a good improviser and scout, a quality that might apply in only a different degree to any man in the army. We had been at Camp Cotton but a short time when he learned from one of the officers of the 5th Massachusetts the location of a house not far from the 2000 block of Magoffin Avenue where, for a reasonable price, a hot bath might be had. This fortuitous discovery was zealously guarded as a secret by the officers of the 2nd Battalion, and proved to be a source of great convenience during our stay on the border. It soon became known as the "Club House."

At this time Pershing was deep in Mexico chasing Villa or at any rate trying to do so, and the troops at Camp Cotton and Fort Bliss were occupied with normal training activities. When the 5th Georgia

first arrived our sentinels used to amuse themselves trying to spot the outposts of the Mexican Army along the south bank of the river. Although they were skilful at concealment, a movement now and then would disclose their location. Our brigade posted sentry squads, in concealment, along the north bank of the river for a distance of several miles downstream. Neither side ever fired a shot, and soon we ceased to give them a thought.

The 5th Georgia was a fairly well trained regiment when it arrived in El Paso. Since June it had been drilling eight hours a day, six days a week, and the men were tough and ready for anything. Most of the officers and men were fairly well off financially, having left jobs or businesses from which they continued to draw pay. Deep in their hearts they desired nothing more than to look and act like Regulars, whom they greatly admired. With the cash to help them, many acquired excellent uniforms and equipment to the end that soldiers of the 5th, on pass in El Paso, were in no manner less creditably dressed than the Regulars.

I think it was in November that Carranza was invited to review the troops stationed in and around El Paso, from the balcony of the Sheldon Hotel. The 5th Georgia took part in this parade through the streets, and although the regiment had passed the reviewing stand by 10:00 A. M., we could not recross Magoffin Avenue to return to Camp Cotton until 1:00 P. M. It was said that 50,000 troops passed in review, and that Carranza accused General Morton of passing the same troops in review many times to impress him.

With the approach of winter Camp Cotton became a cheerless place to live. Sometimes windstorms would almost blow the tents away, and too, the nights were growing colder. No matter how well we battened down the tent flaps the wind and dust got in, causing considerable discomfort. Those of us who chose to remain in camp during the evening wrapped up in blankets and played poker to while away the hours until bed-time, while the remainder, dressed in their best, followed the railroad spur to Magoffin Avenue where ramshackle Ford touring cars served as busses. These gitneys, as they were called, passed every few minutes and never refused a passenger. Almost invariably it was necessary to sit in someone's lap or have them sit in yours. The fare was right, just five cents.

Shortly before Thanksgiving I received instructions to report for training with the 34th U. S. Infantry, an assignment that delighted me beyond measure. Two other lieutenants from the 5th Georgia were also chosen, and the three of us walked north along the spur to our new assignment. The 34th was situated just south of present

day Paisano Drive, at the underpass, along a canal extending north and south, and somewhat more than one-half mile from our proper regiment. Colonel Clarence E. Dentler commanded the regiment, and it was to him that we reported after first calling at the office of the adjutant. Colonel Dentler was every inch a soldier, and a tough one at that. We had been warned by the adjutant about the manner in which we should deport ourselves in his presence, and it was fortunate for us that he had. We lined up in front of his desk, dressed in our best uniforms, and stood rigidly at attention to await his recognition. He continued to peruse a paper in front of him, seemingly unaware of our presence, but each of us knew better; we knew that he was observing every detail about us. Finally, after what seemed an eternity, he sat up at his desk and eyed us with a steely gaze that froze me, and said: "You have been sent to this regiment for training. Being from the National Guard I doubt that there is anything left to teach you. Do what you are told and you will get along. Are there any questions?" Naturally there were none, and after a few additional remarks of a more or less acrid nature we were dismissed into the custody of the Adjutant, Captain Hoffman, who, realizing the hazing we had just received, did his best to make things up to us by kind advice, which we deeply appreciated.

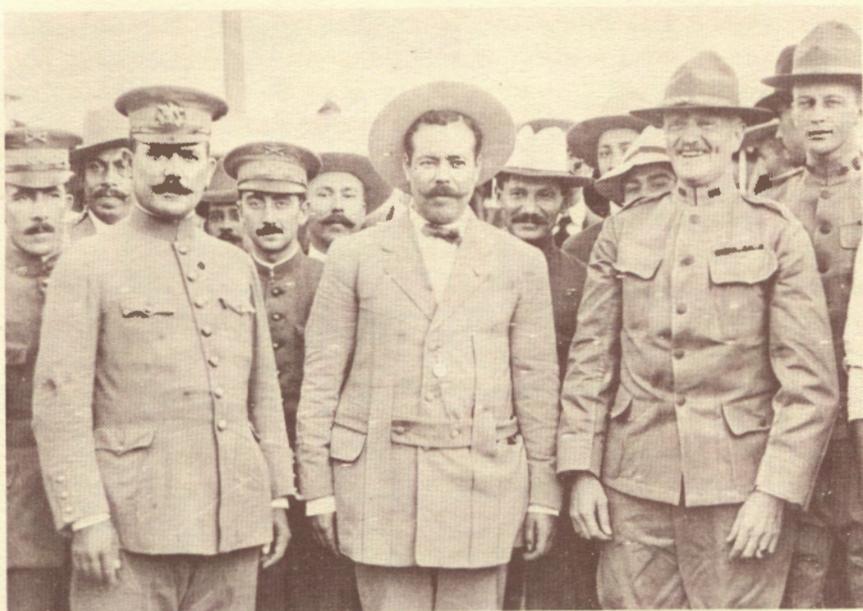
The 34th Infantry headquarters was situated in a wooden building, which also served as an officers' club. Officers' tents were arranged about it in the form of a semi-ellipse, the concave side facing west on a partially shaded, and fairly well grassed parade ground, which was only large enough to hold guard mount. A seldom used cinder road passed in front of the tents following the pattern of the ellipse. Just west of the parade ground was the same railroad spur that served the Georgia brigade, over which one could walk in a few minutes to Magoffin Avenue.

The company streets were just south of the ellipse. I was assigned to Company K, Captain Mark Wheeler, Commanding, and during the morning I reported to him for instructions. The difference between life in a National Guard regiment and a Regular one became immediately apparent to me. When the 34th moved into the area Colonel Dentler had managed to cover the ground with cinders, which minimized dust in dry weather, and equally, mud in wet weather. The tents of the officers and men were placed over wooden frames, the sides of which extended several feet up from the ground so that an occupant might stand erect anywhere inside the tent. My tent was provided with a wooden floor, a canvas cot, a wire serving as a clothes rack across the back of the tent, a wood stove, a cheap

mirror, washing facilities, two straight chairs, and a camp table. There was an electric drop in the center of the tent, which was augmented by a small window at the front of the tent. Mosquito screening completed the living arrangements. One of the soldiers in the company volunteered for a small sum to keep house for me, which offer I cheerfully accepted. Truly I had not been so well fixed since leaving Atlanta. But one should not get the idea that this relative comfort cost the tax payer much. The tent frames for the officers were constructed of scrap material picked up here and there, and the canvas was that taken from discarded tents, which was cut up so as to utilize whatever portions were still serviceable.

The soldiers fared much better. Every tent in K Company street was of new canvas, stretched perfectly over frames of new lumber properly chosen for the purpose. The street was so arranged that the kitchen, made of scrap lumber, was farthest south. A service road passed east and west, just north of the kitchen; then came the company street. Across the road from the kitchen was the first sergeant's tent, marked by a guidon, and farther on were the barber shop, quartermaster store tent, and the tents of the men, so plentiful in number that only four soldiers shared a tent. Neat arms racks occupied a place against the center pole, and canvas cots were arranged so that each occupant had the use of one complete side of a tent. Heat was provided by Sibley stoves, and washing facilities were provided in a nearby building. Each soldier was provided a trunk locker, while such clothing as overcoats, and raincoats were neatly hung from a wire strung across the corners of the tent. Having seen one company street it was unnecessary to look at the others; all were identically constructed and maintained. Such would not have been true in the 5th Georgia. In it and in other Guard regiments there was a lack of uniformity or standards. Just how well a company fared depended largely on the character and training of its officers; some fared excellently, some fairly well, and others poorly.

Captain Wheeler seemed to be a man in his early forties. At the time that I joined the regiment he was busily engaged in preparing to take the tests for promotion to the grade of major. For one thing he was overweight, and this he was desperately trying to remedy, and besides he was required to ride a horse 15 miles in three hours, which accomplishment he as yet felt incapable of performing. When I reported to him for duty he told me that I would be in charge of morning drill and, excepting one Saturday inspection, I never saw him in the company street again during the four months that I was attached to the 34th. For a few days after joining the regiment I

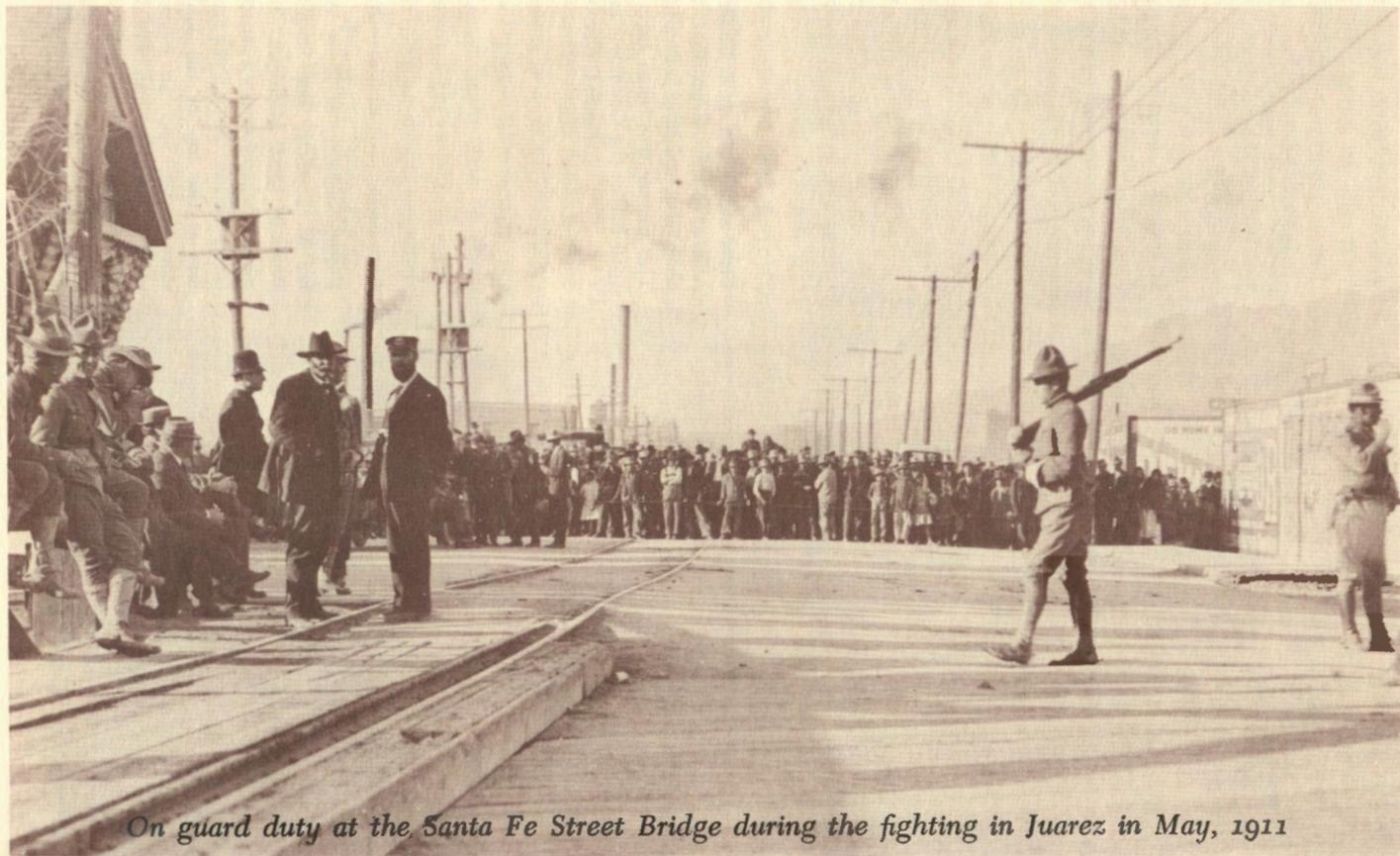


*Front row left to right: Generals Alvaro Obregón, Francisco (Pancho) Villa, and John J. Pershing. This picture was taken early in 1916 before the Columbus raid. (Altman Collection)*



Future Secretary of Army Wilber M. Brucker, then Sergeant Brucker, 33rd Michigan. This picture, taken January 1, 1917 at Camp Cotton, shows spark arrestors at the top of the Sibley stove pipes, and an intimate view of laundry and washing facilities.

*(Photo courtesy of Brig.-Gen. Wallace H. Brucker, Ft. Bliss)*



*On guard duty at the Santa Fe Street Bridge during the fighting in Juarez in May, 1911*

reported to Captain Wheeler at lunch time for instructions for the afternoon, but found them to be vague. Soon I came to realize that unless there was some unusual duty to be performed there was no afternoon duty, list of calls to the contrary, and I stopped asking for instructions.

On the first morning after joining the regiment I reported to the Orderly tent of Company K a few minutes before assembly for drill at 8:00 A.M. I found 1st Sergeant Koehler (this was not his correct name) expecting me. Koehler was a typical copper-haired German soldier, quite prevalent in the army in those days. He stood erectly, 5 feet, 10 inches, and weighed perhaps 165 pounds; florid of face, steel gray eyes, sharp nose, and alert, he presented a soldierly and intelligent appearance. I could tell that he regarded me as a rare bird. He had never come in contact with the National Guard before, and I felt that he was skeptical of my ability, but he was too good a soldier to say anything. The company was accustomed to drill at Dudley (Baseball) Field, a distance of about a mile east of Camp Cotton. Drill at the field lasted until about 10:00 A.M., at which time the return march to the company street was commenced so that any men on guard would have time to prepare for guard mounting on the parade at 11:00 A.M.

Having successfully commanded the company on the first day, I could feel Koehler's attitude toward me changing for the better in the days that followed. I was careful not to exercise more authority than had been delegated to me, and he in turn maintained a correctly formal attitude toward me, but little things that he did showed me clearly that he wanted to help. After all there were only two second lieutenants in the regiment, and K Company had one of them; they had a responsibility.

Immediately following morning drill Lt.-Colonel Miller, the regimental executive, conducted officers' school in my tent, which was selected because it was the largest in the regiment. The class consisted of two first lieutenants; one Regular and one Guard, and two Guard second lieutenants. The first subject undertaken was field service regulations, which at a later date was followed by other courses. We were always dismissed in time to attend guard mount on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, and on those days we joined the remainder of the officers of the regiment at the edge of the parade ground. It was a popular pastime to try to catch any errors made by the adjutant during his inspection of the guard, and the popular airs played during the ceremony always gave everyone a lift.

Following guard mount the normal duties of the day came to an

end. Most of the officers repaired to the officers' mess where there was a bar, and after the usual dice game to determine the victim a highball was taken before lunch. Never in my service have I seen more dignity maintained than in the 34th Infantry mess. Tables, covered with white linen, seated four, and were served by waiters in white uniforms. The food was well prepared and abundant, but not cheap. We paid about \$40 a month for board, which in those days was about 30 per cent of a second lieutenant's gross pay.

The rarified altitude of El Paso, and the corresponding shortage of oxygen, caused many people from lower altitudes to cough. It seemed to me that the 34th coughed more than the 5th Georgia, and since my assignment to the regiment my coughing had increased. I decided that the warmth of my tent had something to do with the matter, and as an experiment I commenced letting the fire die down before retiring, and increasing the ventilation, whereupon in a few days the cough disappeared. Sergeant Koehler remarked on the fact that I seemed to be the only man in the company free of a cough, and asked me how I accounted for this. I related my experiment and suggested that the men in the company follow my example. Everyone agreed, and after a few days there were no more coughs in K Company. The idea spread through the regiment, and soon all were freed of the nuisance.

Thanksgiving in the 34th dawned clear and cold in 1916, but as soon as the sun was shining it was radiantly pleasant. No duties were scheduled for the day except the necessary guard and fatigue. Good times were in store for all; Colonel Dentler, accompanied by as many of the officers and ladies of the regiment as were available, inspected the company messes where a marvellous meal of turkey with all the trimmings had been prepared; a meal that the most fastidious gourmet would have been delighted to sample. Following this inspection the group returned to the officers' mess for a few drinks and an equally nice meal. During the afternoon some of the older officers invited me to ride with them to take a look at El Paso, and in this manner I got my first look at the city north of Magoffin Avenue. Now-a-days at Fort Bliss there are literally thousands of privately owned cars. At that time there was only one in the 34th, and my Captain Wheeler owned it. I remember it well; a Maxwell touring car, even then old in vintage, for which it was said he paid \$3000. Its equivalent in value to-day could be easily obtained for \$300.

Between Thanksgiving and Christmas I frequently visited downtown El Paso in the evenings after dinner. I made my headquarters

in the lobby of the Hotel Paso del Norte, which then as now was renowned as the headquarters for the cattlemen. They, in their characteristic dress, mingled with the officers in their picturesque blue uniforms, trimmed and lined with red, yellow and white to denote the arm of service. To complete the scene the gay young ladies of El Paso frequently graced the social events held at the hotel.

During my entire stay in the 34th I took the morning drill, and in all that time I only experienced one unpleasant breach of discipline. One of the soldiers turned out for drill one morning slightly drunk, a condition that I pretended not to observe, hoping that the march to Dudley Field would sober him up. In this I was disappointed for he continued to do annoying things during the drill, which were so minor as to cause me to withhold rebuke, but which were at the same time disturbing the good order of the company. On the march back to the regimental area from drill, I frequently halted and started the company for the purpose of additional drill, and each time Private King, the malefactor, would be just one count behind the others in bringing his rifle to the ground. By now I was convinced that he was testing me to see if I had the courage to reprimand him, and I knew that the remainder of the company was weighing me in the balance. My future success in the company hinged on my ability to take an appropriate action not too much nor too little. Finally the ordeal came to an end with the arrival of the company in the company street. The company swung into line and was halted. As I directed the 1st sergeant to dismiss it, I also ordered him to have Private King to report to Captain Wheeler after lunch. This small event caused an unprecedented amount of talk in the company, and everyone was curious to know what the outcome would be. Captain Wheeler heard the case astutely, and asked me if I would accept the apology of King in lieu of trying him by court-martial; this I declined to do on the ground that the offense was committed against the United States and not against me, but suggested instead that King promise Captain Wheeler not to give further grounds for complaint. This promise he was only too willing to give, and the incident was closed without anyone suffering a loss of face. My calmness in handling the case against King improved my standing immensely with the 1st sergeant, and he commenced to come to me from time to time with his problems with which I was able to help him. His main problem was in keeping the records of the company, a matter in which I had had several years experience, and well understood.

It seemed that the winter of 1916-1917 was unusually windy. The

effect of the wind in those times was more noticeable than it is to-day. Then the sand, not just the dust, blew in clouds across the town with such force that it cut the skin of those exposed to it. Troops going to and returning from drill were allowed to wear a handkerchief, in the form of a mask, over the nose. Within the tents everything was permeated with dust. I decided to purchase a wardrobe trunk in which to store my effects in a cleaner state, and with this in mind I paid a visit to the Popular Dry Goods Company, which then as now enjoyed a fine reputation with the armed forces. During my ride in the elevator to the floor where the trunks were on display an amusing incident took place. A lady passenger, not aware that there were about 50,000 soldiers in and about El Paso, and mistaking me in my uniform for a porter asked me tartly: "Where are ladies underwear?" to which I replied in assumed hauteur to match, "I trust madam, where they have always been accustomed to be."

Before the Christmas holidays the officers decided to have a dance in the club. The ladies of the regiment assisted in the preparations to the end that on the day of the dance the mess hall was decorated in gala fashion. Music was furnished by the regimental band instead of by an orchestra as is customary to-day, and as far as I can remember everyone enjoyed himself just as much. The 34th's dance was one of a number given by the Regular regiments that winter. The Army dances were attended by many El Pasoans, who responded by inviting the officers and their families to similar affairs at the Country Club, which was then located in a modest building near the junction of Tomkins Avenue and Dyer Street.

With the coming of the holidays the tempo of activities within the regiment slackened. This was the season of the year when family groups planned things together, and those without families felt lonesome and neglected, and in fact they were. I definitely had the blues, for never had I felt so lonesome as that Christmas in a tent at Camp Cotton. Captain Hoffman was having his troubles too. Everybody that he listed to serve as officer of the day, it seemed, had a perfect reason why he couldn't do it. In distress he called at my tent one morning to visit me. I knew when he came to my tent that he was desperate about something, because if the visit had been purely official he would have sent an orderly to summon me to his office, and if it had been purely social he would have made it during the evening. He told me after taking a seat about the woes of being an adjutant, especially during Christmas holidays. It appeared that the older officers were undependable; too much inclined to intem-

perance; minds absorbed by social events, *et cetera, et cetera*. The colonel was worried; he needed a sober, alert and dependable officer for guard duty on Christmas day. I was already way ahead of the adjutant, and stunned him by volunteering for guard duty, not only for Christmas day but for several other days during the holiday period. Captain Hoffman left my tent pleased, and in the days to come did me a number of small favors in return.

Christmas day was sunny and crisp, but the regiment was deserted. Both officers and enlisted men had found some place that could pass for home on this day. For those who were left provision had been made for a gala dinner, but it did not have the same cheerful spirit as Thanksgiving. Colonel Dentler was in his office most of the day, and I spent the time sitting around the club or walking through the area to prevent disorder. On one of these trips I intervened in a most unusual fight between two soldiers. These men, both obviously drunk, but still able to stand without assistance, were fighting in a company street in a most methodical and sportsmanlike manner. Each, in turn, would strike the other in the face with a powerful blow of the fist, so forcefully delivered that it invariably knocked the other man down. After observing this kind of mayhem for a few moments I thought it best to intervene else the regiment would have two soldiers less the following day. They assured me that they were the best of friends and were only playing a game. I sent them packing, each one in a different direction, and dubiously went about my business in another direction.

After the holidays Company K was assigned to guard duty at the Stanton Street and Santa Fé Street bridges one night a week. After supper two trucks would pick up the company and transport it to the Santa Fé Street bridge where tent quarters, for its accomodation, were permanently erected on wooden frames near the present location of the Texas liquor tax office. The purpose of the guard was to maintain order in this section of the city given over at this time to prostitution. The expression, "9th and Mesa," in those days had the same connotation as, "Sodom and Gomorrah" had in Biblical times. Captain Wheeler accompanied the company on these tours of duty, but as soon as he had seen to the details of the guard he was accustomed to turn matters over to me with the expression: "This will interest you more than me."

Juárez was just as popular during the winter of 1916-1917 to tourists and soldiers as it is now. Just across the Santa Fé Street bridge gambling was openly practiced in the bars and casinos, where the clanking of silver coins on the tables lent a note of realism to

the scene. Revolutionary soldiers, armed with rifles, although off duty, lounged here and there conspicuous in straw sombreros, white trousers, straw sandals, and frequently with a serape over the shoulder which served as overcoat, raincoat, and blanket. Standing orders prohibited the military visiting Juárez because Mexico and the United States were still none too friendly, and the presence of American troops could have very easily caused trouble. Just the same both officers and men, dressed in civilian clothes, crossed the bridges, and no great effort was made to prevent it. From time to time arrests were made in the following manner — a military policeman would enter the street car at the Stanton Street bridge, and from the rear call, "Attention!" The unexpectedness of the command caused the unwary to stand up before they realized it was a trap, and this disclosure led to their arrest.

Early in February 1917 General Pershing and his expeditionary force, which had for the past eleven months been chasing Villa in Mexico, crossed the International Boundary near Columbus, and marched to El Paso. The entire force was received with enthusiasm by the garrison and people of El Paso as they filed through the streets of the city, and marched on to the mesa to the east of Fort Bliss where in a few hours they were as much at home as if they had never been away. Pershing had a way about him that distinguished him from anybody else; one felt his presence — he did not have to be announced. Whenever he showed up things were never the same again, and this was so true this time. The first rumor of changes that I heard concerned the 34th. In order to equalize the number of officers on duty in the Regular regiments it was heard that some officers from the 34th would be transferred, and this turned out to be true. Captain A—, who had been my instructor that winter in Field Engineering confided in me that Colonel Dentler had called him in to say: "I have been called on to transfer three captains to the —th Infantry, and your name is number one on the list because you are the least desirable officer in this regiment." Although this revelation shocked me, Captain A— seemed to think it was a good joke, and laughed heartily.

About the middle of February a bomb shell upset my way of life. It became officially known in the regiment that the 34th was going to leave Camp Cotton for station in the Big Bend, near Marfa, Texas. That meant the end of my career in the 34th, which I had come to love as if it were my very own. During the time I had served with the regiment there had never been an officers' call. Daily at 11:50 A.M. the 1st sergeants were accustomed to report to headquarters to

receive orders, which they in turn relayed to their respective captains. Now the word was received that there would be an officers' call; a harbinger of momentous events to come. During the past September I had taken an examination for commission in the Army, and was daily awaiting the arrival of my permanent commission, which I had been informed would be forthcoming soon. I hoped so much that I might receive it in time to go with the regiment, but each day further dimmed my waning hopes. Then came the officers' call one morning. At the appointed hour the officers assembled in the headquarters quietly discussing the probable reason for the call until the appearance of Colonel Dentler, when silence reigned. In a quiet voice he addressed them; choosing his words well he informed them the reason for their presence, and gave the necessary orders to effect the movement of the regiment. When he had completed not a single question was asked for the simple reason that it was a complete order given to trained officers. I received orders shortly to return to the 5th Georgia, and after a sad farewell to my friends in the 34th, I set out along the railroad spur to return to duty with Company E. My baggage followed in a truck.

Company E had only returned from outpost duty at Anapra, New Mexico, west of El Paso, a few days before I rejoined. It had been sent there to guard the approaches to the railroad bridges over the Río Grande, and had pitched tents just east of the railroad station, not very far from the Sunland Race Track. The winter of 1916-1917 was passing and the budding elms and cottonwoods presaged the coming of spring. The cold weather had taken a toll of life in the Georgia brigade, four of whom were from the 5th. Two had died of pneumonia, and the same number of spinal meningitis. In those days pneumonia was deadly to those who were unaccustomed to the high altitude of El Paso. One of those who died of pneumonia was in our company, and his death was so quick that it left us shocked at the suddenness. William Beaumont Hospital did not exist at that time, and the sick at Camp Cotton were cared for in large hospital tents capable of housing perhaps as many as 40 patients. Although such accommodation met only minimum requirements, it must be said that the sick received all the care possible under the circumstances.

It wasn't long after my return until rumors commenced to pass around that war with Germany was being considered. This talk was confirmed when specially trained officers came to the brigade to lecture on the progress of the war in Europe, and to give us instruction in such matters as gas warfare, hand grenades, trench raids, barrages, et cetera. All of a sudden it seemed that everyone had

forgotten that Villa ever lived, and that Mexico had ever been a threat. Early in March we lost Fritz. I never knew what his last name was, but he was as German as the Kaiser. Before the 5th left Atlanta he ingratiated himself with some of the higher officials, and acquired the right to be sutler for the regiment. He went with the regiment to the mobilization camp at Macon, Georgia, and after the regiment was mustered into the Federal service he managed to accompany it in the same capacity to El Paso. He erected a rough pine store measuring perhaps 15 by 30 feet, with housekeeping quarters and a storeroom in the rear, at the south end of the 3rd Battalion, and from this store he served the entire brigade, or rather he served himself. He operated on a cash basis, making an enormous profit from which he returned a small percentage to the regimental fund. He loaned money to the desperate at one per cent, which meant that he would lend one dollar during the month and collect two on payday. When war talk became current Fritz quietly made his plans, and one morning it became known that he had left his store without saying goodbye, leaving several hundred dollars worth of stock on the shelves, and several thousand dollars indebtedness to the trusting merchants of El Paso.

Mention has already been made that the living conditions of the Georgia brigade were unsatisfactory. This condition was relieved in a measure shortly after Christmas when floors were put in the tents, thereby allaying the dust nuisance. Now that the men could live cleaner they became correspondingly better soldiers. Just the same, times had changed; the border tension had passed its climax, and the war that the Georgia boys came to fight with Mexico was not even talked about any more. If there was not going to be any war why should they idle away their time in this muddy, dusty camp, when the slackers and 4-F's were stealing their girls back in Atlanta? Let's go home! was a cry that could be heard frequently now in a rising crescendo doubtlessly heard all the way back in Georgia for soon the orders did come through that the Georgia brigade, and above all the 5th Georgia was going home, but in everybody's heart there was the belief that we were only moving closer to Europe.

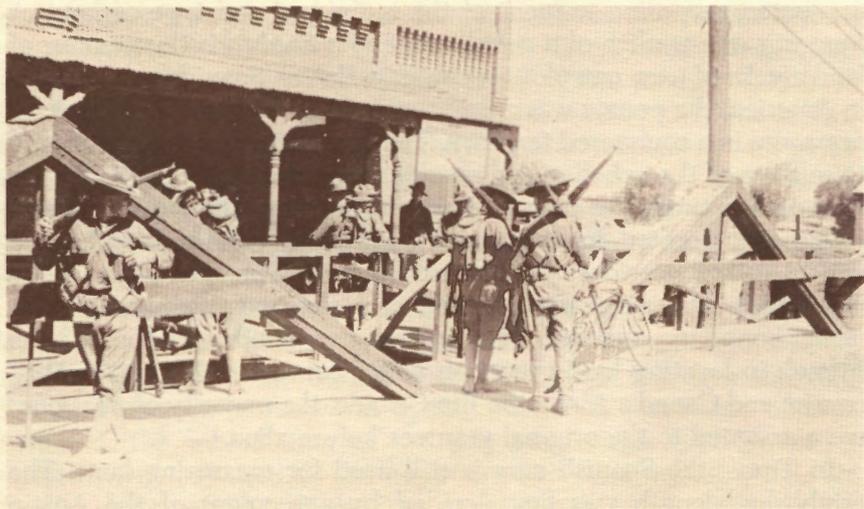
On the afternoon of March 26, 1917 a yard engine puffed down the spur and passed beyond the 5th, pushing some baggage and kitchen cars, and later in the day it brought the same to the 2nd Battalion. We received orders to install our field ranges, and load all of the baggage except a minimum necessary to live with. The following morning the tent area disappeared into the box cars, and the cooks commenced the preparation of dinner in the kitchen cars.

Before 10:00 A.M. the brigade was loaded, the return to Atlanta was underway, and Camp Cotton commenced to resume its original appearance; that of an open field of dust and clay.

At midnight, March 29, "Atlanta's Own," the 5th Georgia Infantry detrained from the cars at the depot in Atlanta. The whole town was wild with joy. It brought back to my mind the contrast between the morning in June 1916 when we marched to the trains and now. Then every man was dressed as he thought fit in queer fitting uniforms of many descriptions; some with sleeves rolled up and others with them down; packs unequal in size, and poorly adjusted to their backs; rifles at all angles; some were eating and others drinking; everybody left ranks at will to kiss any pretty girl he passed, and they liked it. These were Atlanta's darlings — they could do no wrong — they are our boys and we love them, everyone thought or said. To-night the people were expecting more of the same, and when they did not receive it they felt momentarily rebuffed. The long, solid column advanced down Peachtree Street heavier and browner than when they left ten months ago. With shoulders erect, eyes to the front, rifles at a correct angle, and presenting a business-like attitude they advanced through the roaring welcome. They had left Atlanta with sympathy and love, they returned to find that love changed to a feeling of deep pride for a son now grown to manhood.

Yes, Camp Cotton had done a good job.

ALTMAN COLLECTION — EL PASO PUBLIC LIBRARY



*Troops on guard at the Santa Fe Street Bridge*

## Spanish and Mexican Surveying Terms and Systems

By KATHERINE H. WHITE

NEAR THE PRESENT SITE of El Paso, Texas, Juan de Oñate, on April 30, 1598, took official possession of New Mexico and all adjacent territories in the name of the King of Spain.<sup>1</sup> This claim is the basis for the seven recognized Spanish and Mexican land grants of El Paso county — grants ranging in dates from 1690 to 1836 and in area from Canutillo to San Elizario. The seven include the Spanish grants El Pueblo de Socorro, the Inhabitants of Ysleta, Ysleta Town Tract, and the Presidio of San Elizario. Mexican grants are El Canutillo, Ponce de Leon, and Ascarate. These land grants given by the King of Spain and later by the government of Mexico were surveyed, lived upon, and later patented by the State of Texas.<sup>2</sup>

However, to understand the full significance of these land grants it is necessary to define the terminology used. Since the grants under consideration were made by the Spanish and Mexican governments, they differed from the rectilinear system used in grants on the public domain.

The earliest Spanish law establishing standards of land grants to be made in New Spain was the *cedula* or decree proclaimed by King Ferdinand V of Castile on June 18, 1513. This provided that land should be granted to founders or settlers in a new territory in amounts of *caballerias* and *peonias* composed of *fanegas* and *huebras*, graduated according to merit of the individual and type of land. A *fanega* is one-twelfth of a *caballeria*, and a *huebra* is the amount of land a yoke of oxen can plow in one day. Before Spanish colonization in America, the *peonia* was a grant of land to foot soldiers, laborers, or *peones* in a conquered territory. The *caballeria* was a grant of land to soldiers of the *caballeria* or cavalry and was usually equivalent to four or five times the *peonia*. Land fronting on the river was surveyed and granted in long narrow strips of various lengths and widths called *porciones* or portions of land. The meanders of the river made the *porciones* unequal and also were responsible for many boundary disputes. This system was similar to that of the French in locating land grants on water courses in Michigan, Wisconsin, and Canada. Along the Río Grande, the majority of *porciones* were assigned to the original grantees before 1800.<sup>3</sup>

In Texas, the Spanish *vara* is still used for measuring land. The established length was first decided by agreement of the Austin colony surveyors:

By silent acceptance and without statutory recognition, it (the *vara*) had been used to survey and grant hundreds of millions of acres of land. . . . It is now perpetuated in the field notes of every survey of land granted by the republic and state of Texas. After Texas Independence, grants of land were in acres, but the field notes sent to the General Land Office had to give the length of line in *varas* of 33-1/3 inches, for no other measure has ever been accepted in surveying public lands.<sup>4</sup>

By legislative enactment the value of the Spanish *vara* has been established in Texas as one *vara* equals 33.33333 inches. The Castilian *vara*, 33.372 inches, was adopted in Florida. The Mexican *vara* was adopted in the early land descriptions in the area of the public domain of the southwest where early settlement was of Spanish and Mexican origin. This equals 32.9682 inches and is used now in New Mexico and in Arizona.<sup>5</sup>

A straight line of 5,000 *varas* is called a *legua* or Spanish league. A square each side of which is one *legua* is called a *sitio*. A block of five *sitios* comprise a *hacienda*.<sup>6</sup> A *legua* is five thousand *varas* in length; a *sitio* or square Spanish league contains twenty-five million square *varas*. Thus a Spanish league in Texas is 2.63 miles and a *sitio* has 4,428.4 acres. The *hacienda* was an estate of five or more square leagues. A *labor* of land is 1,000,000 square *varas*, or 177.1 acres and was considered as a farm unit, or the quantity of land that could be worked effectively by one family. The *suerte* was a plot of ground originally drawn by lot when lands were parcelled among share holders; the *solar* was a town lot.<sup>7</sup>

The term *fanega* is also used to denote amounts of produce in bushels after it has been gathered from the land, one *fanega* equaling about one and one-half bushels. In his diary, Robert Eccleston, a "Forty-niner," spoke of purchasing in El Paso a *fanega* of corn as supplies for his wagon train "mess" on the way to California. The El Paso County Police Court Minutes define one-half a *fanega* as seventy pounds of corn, and gives further divisions: one *almud* equals eleven and one-third pounds of corn; one-half *almud* equals five and five-sixths pounds of corn; one-fourth *almud* equals two and eleven-twelfths pounds of corn.<sup>8</sup>

There was disagreement among early surveyors as to the exact length of the *vara* as no *vara* chain was then known. The official standard used was the *cordel* or cord of fifty *varas* in length—138.889 feet in Texas, 69 in medieval Spain. This cord was made of *pita encerada*, the waxed fiber of the *pita plant*. This type of linear measurement was used by the Egyptians and most probably also by the Babylonians and Chinese. The rope was stretched taut between two stakes, restretched, then rubbed with a mixture of beeswax and

resin. Often the *cordel* had to be soaked and restretched as the length varied. This created some confusion in frontier surveying. Where the lack of timber prevented the use of the *cordel*, the tract could be surveyed *a pasos de caballo*, or by the steps of a horse.<sup>9</sup>

It has been said that the demarcation of lands, one of the oldest customs in existence, reached Texas through the long circuit of Roman, Spanish, and Mexican law. The survey of a land tract and the record kept were as important as the title itself, for this was the only way in which a titleholder's grant could be located.<sup>10</sup>

In surveying, property can be described in several ways — by metes and bounds, by block-and-lot-system, by coordinate values for each corner, or by township, section, and smaller subdivision.<sup>11</sup> The records of the early grants given by Spain and Mexico along the Río Grande are usually described by metes and bounds. The earliest surveys were made to locate or relocate boundary lines or property, and trees and other natural objects or stakes placed in the ground were used to identify the boundaries. In the El Paso area rocks were used as markers, and often the *acequias*, mounds of earth, sand hills, the cross on top of a church, and other objects of impermanency were used to describe property.<sup>12</sup>

The "rectilinear" system of survey so familiar to the eleven public domain states of the western United States was provided for in the Ordinance of 1785:

Parallel lines were to be drawn at six-mile intervals, both north and south, and east and west, as nearly as the sphericity of the earth would permit. Each of the squares so described was to be called a township, and each north and south tier of townships was to be called a range. Further subdivisions of the townships were to be made by east and west as well as north and south lines surveyed at intervals of one mile, so that each township would be marked off into thirty-six "sections." The sections, each of which was thus a mile square and contained approximately six hundred and forty acres, might then be divided into "halves" and "quarters," the "quarters" into "half-quarters" and "quarter-quarters" and so on indefinitely.<sup>13</sup>

The public domain of the United States is made up largely of areas acquired from France, Mexico and Spain, by cession and purchase. Before the United States acquired this vast area, these foreign governments had made many grants of land to private individuals as a reward for services rendered, to promote trade, and to encourage settlement in their colonies. The Spanish crown and Mexican government used the British system of describing grants in terms of natural objects and metes-and-bounds traverse. The lengths of lines were expressed in the *vara* unit, thirty-six *varas* equaling one hundred feet. These grants, when duly authenticated

and confirmed, were recognized by the government of the United States and the areas were separated from the lands subject to disposal under the general public land laws.<sup>14</sup>

Texas was not a public domain state. Under the agreement of annexation with the United States the former republic and now new state retained her public lands. However, there were many systems used in the western section to dispose of the land, and in this area are found ranges, townships, sections, blocks, leagues, *labores*, and surveys of original grantees. These original-grantee surveys in some instances have been recognized by the State of Texas.<sup>15</sup>

It is difficult to define the boundaries described in these original grants or surveys for, like other early grants, the "point of beginning" for descriptions by metes and bounds are no longer distinguishable. There have been many transfers and subsequent ownerships and subdivisions were not recorded. Those that were recorded usually had scanty or defective descriptions.<sup>16</sup>

The Río Grande, the one factor which made the area included in the seven grants of El Paso county desirable, was the greatest destroyer of markers and "points of beginning." Consequently, boundary disputes growing out of the river's constant shifting and flooding were the results. Were it not for the river changes which placed "the island" containing Socorro, Ysleta and San Elizario on the north side of the river, there would be no recognized land grant of Spanish origin in El Paso county.

#### REFERENCES

1. Carlos E. Castaneda, *Our Catholic Heritage in Texas*, (Austin, 1936), Vol. I, 243.
2. David A. Reeves, Director Records Division General Land Office of Texas, to author, March 3, 1960.
3. J. Roy Reasonover, *Land Measures*, (Houston, 1946), 1-9.
4. Virginia H. Taylor, *The Spanish Archives of the General Land Office of Texas*, (Austin, 1955), 75, 76.
5. *Manual of Surveying Instructions*, (Washington, 1947), 466, 467. The Texas Act cited is found in *Acts of the Texas Legislature*, 1919, 232.
6. Reasonover, *Land Measures*, 18.
7. *Ibid.*; Taylor, *The Spanish Archives*, 77, 78.
8. Nancy Lee Hammons, *A History of El Paso County, Texas, to 1900*, (Master's thesis, Texas Western College, 1942), 80.
9. Edmond R. Kiely, *Surveying Instruments, Their History and Classroom Use*, (New York, 1947), 9; Reasonover, *Land Measures*, 9; Taylor, *The Spanish Archives*, 69-72.
10. Taylor, *The Spanish Archives*, 69.
11. Russell C. Brinker and Warren C. Taylor, *Elementary Surveying*, (Scranton, Penn., 1958), 309.
12. Records of the Pioneer Abstract and Guarantee Title Company of El Paso, Texas: *Abstracts of Title* 1403, 1993, 4086, 34628 and *Block Files* Canutillo General, Ynojosa Grant, and Ysleta Grant General.
13. John D. Hicks, *The Federal Union*, (Cambridge, Mass., 1957), 171.
14. *Manual of Surveying Instructions*, (1947), 465.
15. Reasonover, *Land Measures*, 24.
16. Brinker and Taylor, *Elementary Surveying*, 310, 311.

## TULAROSA: Last of the Frontier West

by C. L. Sonnichsen.

A Western American Classic. (New York: Devin-Adair, 1960. 336 pages .Illustrations, bibliography.)

THESE ARE "the years of harvest" for C. L. Sonnichsen. His "Tularosa" is the eighth of a series of distinguished books on the West and Southwest which started with *Billy King's Tombstone* in 1942.

The real harvest has come in the last five years, with Dr. Sonnichsen producing four books in that period. They are the gleanings of hundreds of interviews, many thousands of miles of travel, and countless words put down as notes since the author fell in love with this country in the 1930s and started to write about it. And all this while heading the largest department at Texas Western College, with all the administrative duties that entails.

*Tularosa* is his best.

It is hard for us who live in the growing towns and cities of the West to remember—or realize—how short a time ago it was that men carried guns in their belts and scabbards, and used them to settle their differences which they thought the law couldn't or shouldn't handle.

We see such men in the movies and on television, but it's all fiction there. Dr. Sonnichsen in *Tularosa* does a better job of showing the true story of our Southwest than any work of fiction could. *Tularosa* is moving, exciting fact written with a style that moves you to turn the pages quickly.

Dr. Sonnichsen has brought to life the stalwart figures of the Tularosa Basin—our country. They are great figures, whether you think what they did was right or not.

Here are Albert B. Fall, whose old home stands high on the Arizona Street hill; Pat Garrett, killer of Billy the Kid; Oliver Lee, not so well known but perhaps the strongest of the crowd; Francois Jean Rochas, the "Frenchy" who the author calls "the bravest man in New Mexico" and whose cabin in Dog Canyon still draws the hardy into the mountain wilderness.

Then there is Albert J. Fountain, the former El Pasoan who, with his young son, disappeared into the White Sands and was never found. The stories of these men and their troubles are told in *Tularosa* better than in any other book this reviewer has read.

The book starts with the "great Trek" of Texas cattlemen into New Mexico after the Civil War and of the troubles they brought with them. They brought with them their customs, good and bad, and they had their

own code, based on courage, loyalty, clannishness, and firm convictions. Under this code they fought the big cattle outfits and anyone else not of their clan.

The famed Oliver Lee - A. J. Fountain feud is a central theme of the book and Dr. Sonnichsen lays out facts never before printed about this controversial battle which ended in Fountain's death.

The story, and it is a story, begins with the founding of Tularosa. It ends with the story of John Prather, one of the old bunch whose family came to the Tularosa country in 1883, and of Prather's battle with the Army, which sought to evict him from the ranch he had fought for. Just as the old bunch usually won, so has John Prather.

Now the military has taken over much of the Tularosa Basin. Where once Tularosa was "the last of the frontier west" of the cowmen, now it is a new frontier. The frontier of men seeking to step into space by rocket power.

Dr. Sonnichsen concludes that "there may some day be a space port in what used to be W. W. Cox's pasture—only a few miles from Pat Garret's ranch in Bear Canyon."

Dr. Sonnichsen has done a superb job of telling an exciting story.

*Texas Western College.*

JOHN MIDDACH

---

## OUR SPANISH SOUTHWEST

*by Lynn I. Perrigo.*

(Dallas: Banks Upshaw & Co., 1960, 498 pages.)

OUR SPANISH SOUTHWEST is the ambitious undertaking of Professor Lynn Perrigo of New Mexico Highlands University. The main theme of this detailed and comprehensive history of the Spanish Southwest is the intermingling of the Indian, Spanish, and Anglo-American cultures within the present states of California, Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas. Beginning with the pre-Columbian Indian civilization, the author goes on to show how the blending of these three distinct cultural groups inhabiting the Southwest created a unique cultural pattern within the United States in modern times. Professor Perrigo ends his story by showing how the amalgamation of the Red Man, the Spanish-American, the Mexican-American, the Anglo-American and other "hyphenated" Americans into the American melting pot stands as a tribute to the American Federal Union.

Just how these different people were blended into Americans during a period of tremendous political, social, and economic change is a great historical drama skillfully and impartially narrated by Professor Perrigo. It is a story of injustice, bloodshed, and social upheaval; but it is also a

story of adjustment, reform, progress, and achievement. In leading the reader down the path of time and through the different scenes of this great drama, the author introduces us to the members of the colorful cast, all of whom left their imprint on the story of the Southwest: pueblo and nomadic Indians, Christian missionaries, *conquistadores*, Spanish governors, political chiefs, mountain men, filibusters, "49ers," confederate rebels, riders of the jackass mail and pony express, railroad builders, miners, sheepmen, cattlemen, cattle rustlers, soldiers, lawmen, bandits, etc.

Though the historical characters are too numerous to mention and the historical events on the international, national, state, and local scenes are complex, the author rises to the difficult task of weaving a detailed, objective, and well-balanced story in which he shows his genius for organization and interpretation. Never once does he lose his sense of perspective as always he focuses local developments in the light of their state, national, and international ramifications. Moreover, he employs the latest historical interpretation in his treatment of various topics. For example, in his discussion of the raid on Columbus, New Mexico, in 1916, he indicates that recently some historians question whether Pancho Villa actually was responsible for the raid. Another recent historical interpretation which the author uses, but which the reviewer finds difficult to accept, is that pertaining to the Polk administration's Mexican policy. Finally, the author's great attention to detail is attested to by the fact that the reviewer could find only one minor omission and this was probably due to the limits of space. Specifically, in discussing the foreign intervention in Mexico during the American Civil War, the author fails to mention that the British and Spanish also sent troops following the suspension of the payment on the foreign debts by the Juarez government. Although the British and Spanish troops were soon withdrawn, the author leaves the impression that the invasion of Mexico was originally a unilateral action staged only by the forces of Napoleon III of France.

Of the author's style, one can only say that proof of it is in the reading. Although the story of the Southwest is as long as well as a complicated one, the author never fails to retain the attention of the reader. The text is clear, simple, and easily readable. The most interesting parts of the book are those dealing with the independence of Texas, the Texan expedition to New Mexico, the Union and Confederate military campaigns in the Southwest, the building of the railroads, the Cattle Country, law and disorder, and the American policy toward the Indians.

For those interested in additional details the author has included a list of selected reading references at the end of each chapter. The value of the book is further enhanced by the inclusion of fourteen maps and a twenty-five page index. The greatest value of the text is that here for the

first time we have in one volume the only detailed and comprehensive history of the social, economic, and cultural developments of the Southwest. In writing *Our Spanish Southwest* Professor Perrigo has drawn extensively from the original sources and secondary works listed in the 69 pages of classified bibliography. The result of his labor is an excellent synthesis of all the important historical works preceding it and as such makes a ready reference for the historian and an excellent textbook. Finally, the book should also appeal to the layman.

Alice D. Harvey

---

### GOLD COUNTRY, 1828-1858

by *Elma Dill Russell Spencer*.

(San Antonio, Texas: The Naylor Company. \$5.00.)

ON THE CRISP, bright morning of October 6, 1859, a certain young man by the name of Oliver Russell walked along Ferry Street in the crude little mining town of Auraria, Kansas Territory, and reflected on the considerable changes that had taken place in the last several months. Oliver had just watched his eldest brother, Green, depart on a small boat for a journey down the South Platte River to Nebraska. A few days earlier he had seen another brother, Levi, off on the newly-established stage coach. Thus for a short while the "Russell boys" were separated—and Oliver was reflecting on the "phenomenal gold rush development" which had begun in a quiet way on the bank of Cherry Creek in the summer of 1858 and which, in the past four months, had brought feverish activity to the Pike's Peak country.

The discovery of gold in 1858 by a group of Georgia prospectors led by one Green Russell and the consequent development that this discovery brought to "an unknown wasteland, an island of huge and forbidding mountains, avoided for centuries by all except trappers and Indians" form the subject matter of Mrs. Spencer's *Gold Country 1828-1858*.

A descendent of one of the "Russell boys" (as Green, Levi, and Oliver came to be fondly called in the gold-rush days), Mrs. Spencer builds her chronicle upon the exploits and the fortunes of these three searchers for gold. She takes her readers first to South Carolina, where the lure of gold had brought a certain James Russell in the early nineteenth century. From there, she follows James Russell and his growing family to the environs of Auraria, Georgia, where the new country's "first sizable gold rush occurred." There she lets her readers listen to Mr. Russell's declaration to his three young sons: "Oh, I tell you, when there's gold in your blood it can lead to anything!"

The Russell patriarch was right—on two counts: there was indeed gold in the Russell blood, and it did indeed lead to many things. It first led Green Russell to California in 1849, where he amassed a valuable experience and a considerable fortune—two assets which proved of tremendous value nine years later when he induced his two brothers and dozens of his fellow Georgians to test his “nose for gold” in the Rocky Mountains. And thus began the third major gold rush in the United States.

Told with warmth, humor, and scrupulous attention to fact, *Gold Country* 1828-1858 records the hardships, discouragements, adventures, labors, celebrations, and successes of one party of prospectors who had faith that there was gold in “them thar hills.” And the hills—along with Green Russell’s unerring instinct—did not disappoint them. Within some fifteen months after the party’s arrival at Ralston’s Creek in the wild Pike’s Peak country, Oliver Russell could put his brother Levi on a stage-coach and his brother Green on a river boat and walk the main street of another Auraria (just across the creek was a rival community called Denver’s City) and reflect upon the occurrence that was “lifting” the face of a wilderness: “Canyon City and Colorado City were new supply towns in the south. . . . Boulder on the north, lay in a beautiful valley besides a rushing creek. . . . Travel was easier. . . . Better roads were being built. . . . Bridges, too, were put in by toll road construction companies. . . . Travel time from the east was being speeded up. . . . Traveling night and day, the coaches carried passengers, mail, and express from the Missouri River to Denver in seven days. . . . The towns still had a raw look due to the newly constructed buildings, but a feeling of permanence pervaded. . . . Not all the settlers were miners, but many saw sure wealth in the fertile soil along the streams.”

Vastly different, mused Oliver Russell, from that hazardous crossing of the Platte River in May a year ago . . . and the “great difficulty in the Platt canyon,” where the “going over the craggy mountains was rough” and “clothing was torn from their backs, their flesh cut and bruised” and their “provisions ran out and the men had to subsist on what they killed.”

And vastly interesting reading is the “Russell boys’” success story, as Mrs. Spencer records it—and relates it intimately to the success story of the entire Rocky Mountain country.

LILLIAN COLLINGWOOD

*Texas Western College*

> **CONTRIBUTORS** <



COLONEL ALBION SMITH, U.S.A. (Ret.) should be well-known to readers of *PASSWORD*. He is the author of several articles in addition to a number of book reviews. At present he is working on a detailed study of frontier forts of the Old Southwest.

KATHERINE H. WHITE is a native of Marshall, Texas, but has lived in El Paso for the past eleven years. She was graduated from Texas State College for Women (now Texas Women's University) in 1950 with an A.B. degree. She is now working towards a Master's Degree in History at TWC. The present article was taken from a seminar paper she wrote for Dr. R. W. Strickland.



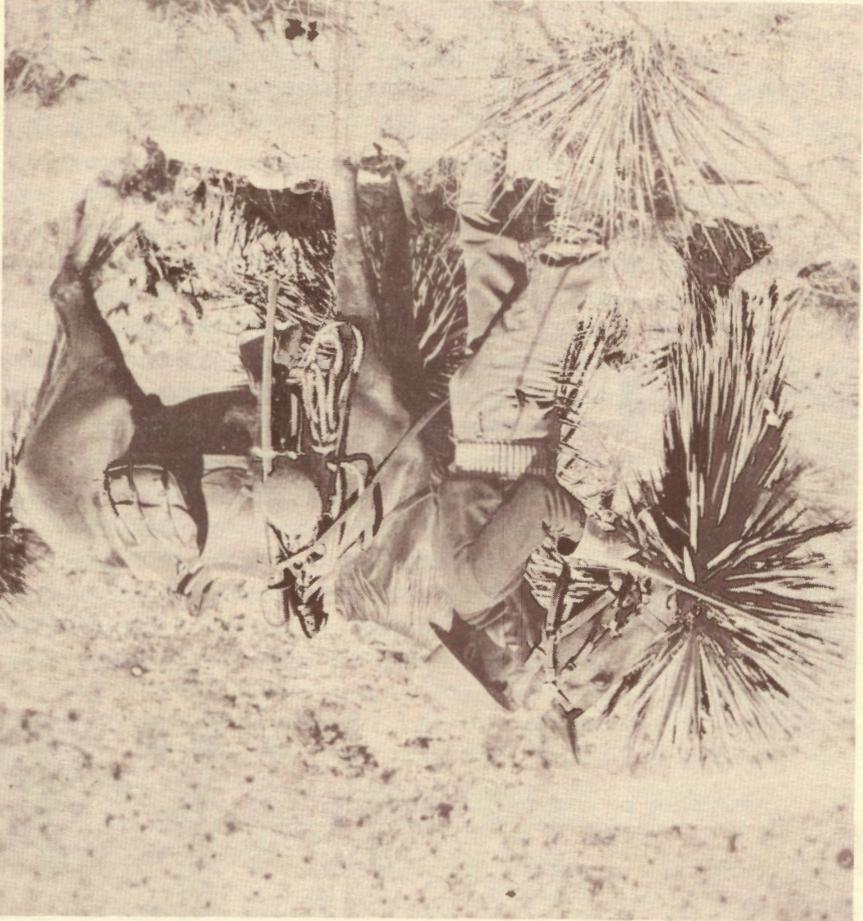
Mrs. White is married to Attorney Richard C. White and resides at 2523 Savannah. She is the mother of three children, Roderick 9, Richard 7, and Raymond 5. Her extra activities include a directorship of the El Paso Bar Auxiliary and membership in the American Association of University Women, Crockett School P-TA, St. Clement Episcopal Church, and the Representatives' Wives Club of the Texas State Legislature. She is also the author of a series of articles published in the El Paso *Herald Post* on the Texas Western College Literary Tour of Europe.

JOHN MIDDAGH is Chairman of the Department of Journalism at TWC. He is the author of *Frontier Newspaper: The El Paso Times* which was reviewed in the July, 1959, (V. IV, No. 3) issue of *PASSWORD*.

ALICE D. HARVEY is the wife of Dr. James C. Harvey, Assistant Professor of History at TWC. She is a teacher of history at El Paso High School and is chairman of the Department of Social Studies. At present she is completing her dissertation for her doctorate in History at the Univ. of Texas.

LILLIAN COLLINGWOOD is Assistant Professor of English at TWC. A graduate of TWC, she received her Master's degree in English from the University of Michigan. Mrs. Collingwood is a frequent reviewer for the "Book Shelf" of the El Paso *Herald Post* and, in addition, is in great demand for oral reviews by women's clubs of El Paso.

*Cavalryman near Fort Bliss, Texas, August 1898*



## *Texas Cavalry at Fort Bliss — 1898*

By RICHARD K. McMASTER

MR. PEYTON IRVING, JUNIOR, Adjutant of the Department of Texas, United Spanish War Veterans, has recently presented to the Replica Museum at Fort Bliss his collection of rare photographs of the 1898 era.

The regular garrison of Fort Bliss departed in the spring of 1898 for service in Cuba and on 29 July, Headquarters of the 1st Squadron and Troop F, 1st Texas Cavalry, arrived for temporary duty.

Major Churchill Towles commanded the 1st Squadron, 1st Texas Cavalry, and the post of Fort Bliss. Troop F was commanded by Captain George T. West. William Trimble was 1st Sergeant of the troop.

On 17 September, 1898, the Texas Cavalry was ordered to Fort Sam Houston and Company C, 3rd Texas Infantry arrived as its replacement.

Mr. Irving's collection provides interesting views of Fort Bliss and also of his companions of the 1st Texas Cavalry of 1898.

The photograph on the opposite page shows the dress and equipment of the cavalry soldier in 1898.

### *Contest Winners*

WITH 175 VOTES CAST, the following articles were chosen as the best published in *PASSWORD* during the year 1960:

First prize of \$100 went to Dr. Rex W. Strickland for "P. T. Herbert: Ante-Bellum Resident of El Paso."

Second prize of \$50 went to Mrs. Estelle Goodman Levy for "The Myar Opera House and Other Theaters in Old El Paso."

Third prize of \$25 was divided between Clyde Wise, Jr., for "The Effects of the Railroads Upon El Paso" and Rex E. Gerald for "The Mimbres Indians."

The prizes were awarded at the January meeting of the Society.

OFFICERS OF  
THE EL PASO COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

<i>President</i>	DR. JOSEPH LEACH
<i>First Vice President</i>	RICHARD WHITE
<i>Second Vice President</i>	MRS. WILLARD SCHUESSLER
<i>Third Vice President</i>	COL. WALTER STEVENSON
<i>Recording Secretary</i>	MRS. DEE BELDING
<i>Corresponding Secretary</i>	MRS. PAUL HEISIG
<i>Treasurer</i>	CHRIS FOX
<i>Curator</i>	MRS. CHARLES GOETTING
<i>Historian</i>	JACK VOWELL, JR.
<i>Immediate Past President</i>	JOHN NEFF

**DIRECTORS**

1959-1961

MRS. GEORGE BRUNNER  
MAJ. JOHN DENNY  
ARTHUR GALE  
FRANK H. HUNTER  
MAJ. RICHARD K. McMASTER  
DR. EUGENE O. PORTER  
MRS. REGINA SCHUSTER RABB

1960-1962

MRS. VICTOR H. ANDERSON, SR.  
WILLIAM C. COLLINS  
MRS. E. F. FLORES  
COL. JOSEPH MAGOFFIN GLASGOW  
MISS MARGARITA GOMEZ  
ALLEN SAYLES  
MRS. H. H. VARNER

1961-1963

HAROLD SHARPLEY  
MRS. CHARLES LEVY  
JAMES COGGESHALL  
CONREY BRYSON  
MARSHALL HAIL  
HUGH ENGLISH  
MRS. PETER DE WETTER

**BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

MRS. C. N. BASSETT  
MRS. L. C. BRITE  
MISS ANN BUCHER  
COLBERT COLDWELL  
FRANK FEUILLE III  
MRS. JOSEPHINE CLARDY FOX  
BRIG. GEN. W. J. GLASGOW  
RALPH GONZALES  
PAGE KEMP  
PAUL HARVEY, SR.  
MRS. DEXTER MAPLE, SR.  
R. E. MCKEE  
MRS. RUTH RAWLINGS MOTT  
MRS. J. W. LORENTZEN  
MRS. W. H. PETERSON, SR.  
DORRANCE D. RODERICK, SR.  
DR. STEPHEN A. SCHUSTER  
MRS. MAURICE SCHWARTZ  
JUDGE R. EWING THOMASON  
MRS. W. W. TURNEY  
MRS. L. A. VELARDE

