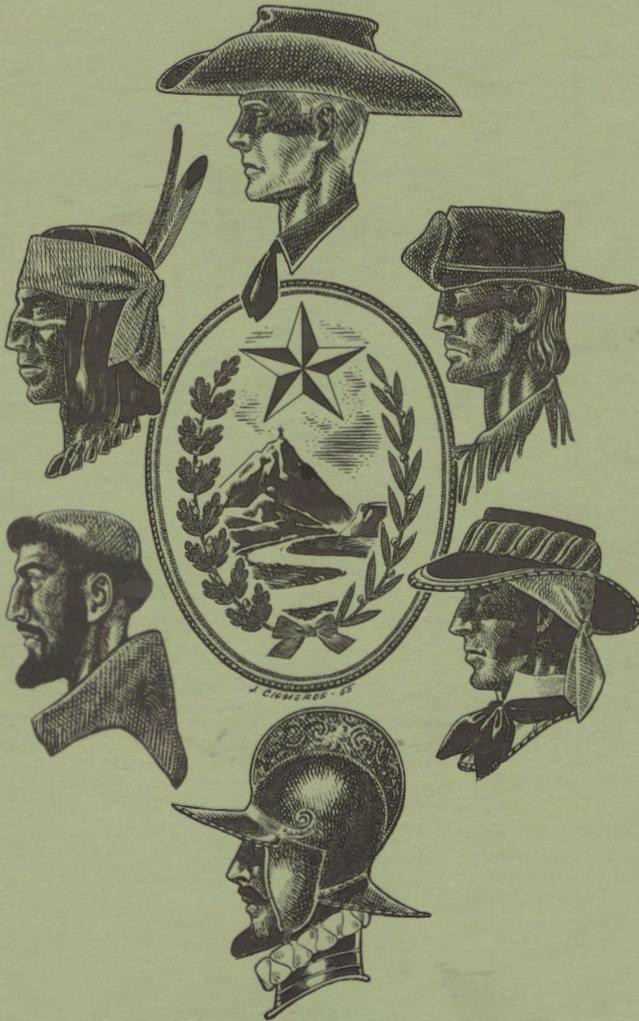


# PASSWORD



THE EL PASO COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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# PASSWORD

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**IN MEMORIAM**

**Mrs. Edna Scotten Ferris  
Mrs. Anne Hubbard King**

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## THE MERCHANTS AND THE MILITARY, 1849-1854

by W. H. Timmons

In accordance with the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo of February 2, 1848, which officially ended the war between the United States and Mexico, the Rio Grande became an international boundary between the two nations up to the point where the river struck the southern boundary of New Mexico. All territory north of the river thus became a part of the United States, and El Paso del Norte, the largest of the settlements south of the river, became a border town. By the end of the year, the California gold rush had begun, overnight bringing in hordes of discharged soldiers, outlaws, wife deserters, debtors, and characters larger than life, transforming the quiet, sleepy little community of El Paso del Norte into a bustling, brawling frontier crossroads. To the California emigrants who braved hundreds of miles of the vast dry plain of western Texas, a region virtually without timber, grassland, or water, El Paso del Norte, with its cottonwood trees, gardens, vineyards, town plaza, adobe structures with thick walls and shaded entrances, must have seemed like a true oasis. Here was the last place to rest, purchase supplies, secure passports, and refresh dehydrated bodies with generous allotments of "Pass whiskey."<sup>1</sup>

By late 1849 five Anglo-American settlements had been founded along the left bank of the Rio Grande. The first and northernmost was Frontera, established about eight miles above El Paso del Norte in 1848 by T. Frank White, who built a trading post there to reap profits from the old Chihuahua-Santa Fe Trade, coupled with the new traffic of gold seekers passing through on their way to California. White's hope that a military post would be established at Frontera never materialized, so when United States Boundary Commissioner John R. Bartlett arrived in the area in November, 1850, White offered him the option of buying Frontera for \$3,000, or two acres of land for one dollar and the buildings for \$65 a month on condition that an observatory be erected there. Bartlett accepted the second option and built an observatory which the boundary commission used during 1851. Some months later, Frontera was completely destroyed by Apaches.<sup>2</sup>

To the south of Frontera and across from El Paso del Norte, Mexican War veteran Simeon Hart late in 1849 established his flour mill known as "El Molino." Several years later he built his residence which is still standing, now La Hacienda Cafe. Commissioner Bartlett called Hart's mill "a fine establishment," and the house, built in the Mexican style, was "large and convenient, containing every luxury and comfort of home," a prin-

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Dr. W.H. Timmons, emeritus professor of history at the University of Texas at El Paso, is a frequent contributor to *Password*. He offers here for the first time an important letter by local pioneer B. F. Coons.

cipal attraction being the private library. Here Hart and his wife, Jesusita, provided accommodations for weary travelers and entertained them in a charming and gracious manner.<sup>3</sup>

To the east of Hart's mill lay the property of Benjamin Franklin Coons, who purchased it from Juan María Ponce de León of El Paso del Norte for \$18,000, probably in the summer of 1849. Paseño aristocrat Ponce de León had spent many years developing his property, so that at the time he sold it to Coons, it contained an adobe ranch house, quarters for a hundred laborers, and facilities for flourishing livestock and agricultural activities. Major Jefferson Van Horne, commander of six companies of the Third Infantry which arrived on September 8, 1849, found the facilities on Coon's Ranch to be the most suitable in the area. Coons therefore leased the main buildings and six acres of land to the Army for a military post for \$4,200 a year. His contract also provided that he would be in charge of transporting supplies to the new post. Obviously, his speculative venture had paid off handsomely. Shortly after, he erected new buildings, including a tavern, warehouse, stables, and corrals just west of the Army post to house his growing mercantile interests.<sup>4</sup>

To the east of Coons' Ranch, or Franklin as it came to be called, was Magoffinsville, established in 1849 by the veteran Chihuahua trader, James W. Magoffin. The settlement came to be known as "the American El Paso," and consisted of a group of large, well-built adobe structures erected around an open square. They were used as stores and warehouses and were stocked with merchandise. The property was situated about half a mile from the river and was watered by an acequia which ran through the square. Here Magoffin built a mansion of hacienda proportions where he frequently hosted army officers and government officials, entertaining them in the grand manner. "With delicacies prepared in New York and Paris for the foreign markets," he could serve "a cold collation that would have done credit to the caterer of a metropolitan hotel." John W. Bartlett, the boundary commissioner, stayed at Magoffinsville for a while, and on one occasion gave a party which lasted all night. It was a great success, even to four great "new-fashioned chandeliers improvised for the occasion" out of sardine tins fixed to a hoop off a pork barrel, wrapped with Apache calicoes and supplied with "a dozen burners each," that "shed such a ray of light upon the festal hall, as rendered the charms of the fair señoritas doubly captivating."<sup>5</sup>

Magoffin's merchandising and livestock activities, supplemented by income from a ranch known as Canutillo about fifteen miles to north, brought him a fortune, although his efforts to levy tolls on salt mines he controlled on the eastern slopes of the San Andreas Mountains met with little success. He furnished Bartlett's commission with food, clothing, and supplies for which he received a sum totalling more than \$5,500, which he

deposited in his account with the firm of Wood, Bacon, and Co. of Philadelphia. Bartlett predicted that Magoffinsville would remain the center of American settlements in the El Paso area. Indeed, it was here that on August 17, 1850, Magoffin married Dolores Váldez, the younger sister of his deceased first wife.<sup>6</sup>

To the east of Magoffinsville was the property of Hugh Stephenson, of Chihuahua mining fame. He had married Juana Ascárate, who came from a prominent landowning family of El Paso del Norte, and the property was situated on that part of a family estate which the shifting Rio Grande had placed on the north side. Stephenson had extensive silver and copper mining and livestock interests, and was the first to prospect and develop systematically the mineral resources of New Mexico, particularly in the Organ Mountains. On his property in El Paso area, which by 1852 had come to be known as Concordia, he erected a number of buildings, and his home was large and comfortable, though perhaps not as pretentious as Magoffin's or Hart's.<sup>7</sup>

Thus, by the end of 1849 five Anglo-American settlements had been established north of the river. In addition, there were the three Mexican settlements of Ysleta, Socorro, and San Elizario, which the shifting river had placed on the American side. San Elizario was the largest of these, and in 1850 became the seat of El Paso County, which the Texas legislature had organized early that year. It was evident that a bilingual, bicultural, binational complex was taking shape at the Pass of the North.<sup>8</sup>

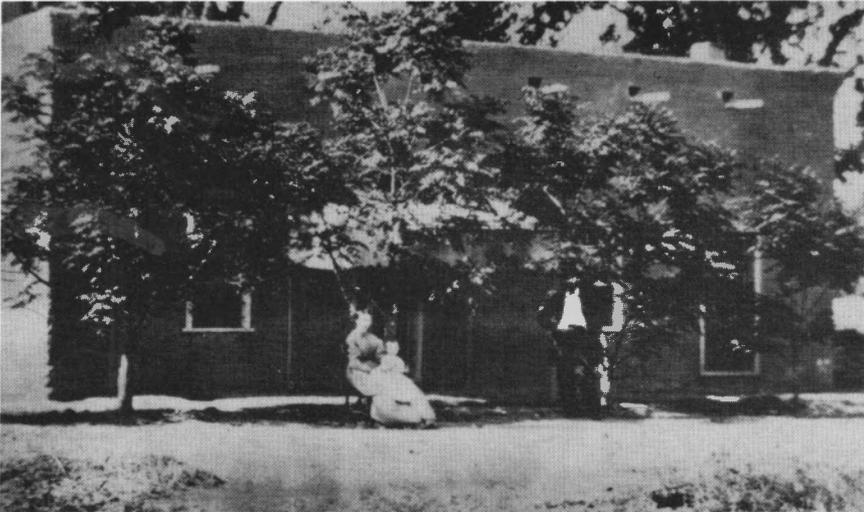
Already there were a number of compelling reasons for establishing a military post on the Rio Grande—the defense of the new boundary, the protection of the new settlements against Apache attacks, and the maintenance of law and order which had become increasingly critical with the arrival of hordes of California emigrants. A recommendation of Secretary of War W. L. Marcy in July, 1848, that a post ought to be established on the north side of the Rio Grande opposite El Paso del Norte was at length implemented with the arrival of six companies of infantry from San Antonio on September 8, 1849, under the command of Major Jefferson Van Horne. Two companies were stationed at the old presidio of San Elizario, while the other four established quarters across the river from El Paso del Norte on Benjamin F. Coons' ranch, which Van Horne called the Post Opposite El Paso, New Mexico.<sup>9</sup>

As to the establishment of a permanent site for the military post in the area, both Van Horne and his commander at San Elizario, Captain W. S. Henry, favored the old presidio there. Benjamin F. Coons, described by Van Horne as a "shrewd, enterprising man," was charging the Army \$350 per month, while on the other hand, said Van Horne, the rent for the hospital and officers' quarters at the presidio was much less. Moreover, Van Horne believed that the old presidio could be repaired partially and

rebuilt at little expense. With a few adjacent buildings which could be rented or bought on moderate terms, he said, the presidio could be made to quarter four or even six companies much better than the existing facilities on Coons' property. Wood was plentiful, grazing was good around San Elizario, and the people there were orderly and well behaved. Finally, Van Horne pointed out that if the troops were stationed at the old presidio, they would be "removed from the wretched hordes of gamblers, drunkards, and desperadoes in El Paso del Norte."<sup>10</sup>

Van Horne's plan to locate the permanent post at San Elizario, however, encountered opposition from several quarters. Captain Thomas L. Brent of the quartermaster corps said that the site was low and subject to overflow water, and was at that time standing in numerous stagnant pools. Moreover, he said that the old barracks were in a most dilapidated state, and even if they were repaired, they would accommodate only two companies. Lastly, Captain Brent said he could see no military advantage in the San Elizario site.<sup>11</sup>

Strong opposition to Van Horne's plan came also from the merchants of the area. Under the leadership of James W. Magoffin, they drew up a petition pointing out that any removal of troops would leave the major routes through the Pass of the North completely unprotected, expose United States citizens to Indian depredations, and endanger property valued at \$300,000. All law and order would break down, the merchants argued, and the area would soon become victimized by the large band of outlaws of all nations at that time infesting the town of El Paso del Norte.



Officers' quarters were in tree-shaded adobe buildings when Fort Bliss was located at Magoffinsville.

*(Courtesy National Archives)*

This point in particular was emphasized by Colonel Emilio Langberg, the commander of the El Paso del Norte garrison, who said that it would be impossible for the small number of troops under his command to protect the settlers from the Indians and the marauders. As a result, for the time being at least, the four companies of infantry remained on the property of Benjamin F. Coons, while the other two were left in San Elizario.<sup>12</sup>

Captain W. S. Henry, the commanding officer at San Elizario, strongly urged that it be established as a permanent post, pointing out that the presence of troops there had given the residents a feeling of security and had served as a great impetus for increasing agricultural production and stockraising. "The inhabitants are nervously anxious to know whether this protection is to be continued," he said, adding that many were refusing to make any improvements owing to the uncertainty, while others were leaving and settling on the Mexican side of the river. The old presidio, he concluded, offered numerous advantages for the construction of a permanent garrison that could not be found elsewhere. But the authorization that Captain Henry sought never came.<sup>13</sup>

A few months after Van Horne stationed his troops at the Post Opposite El Paso, Simeon Hart established his first flour mill, and on March 28, 1850, signed his first contract with the Army. Although a quantity was not specified, it provided that he would furnish flour for one year to the posts of Doña Ana, the Post Opposite El Paso, and San Elizario for eleven cents a pound. Most of Hart's flour had to be imported from his father-in-law's mill at Santa Cruz de Rosales in Chihuahua, since the mill on the Rio Grande remained a comparatively small operation for some time. Hart tried to get his contract extended to three years and expanded to include all military posts in Texas as far east as Eagle Pass, pointing out that he had spent \$25,000 for machinery, a wheat crop, and the purchase of teams. Instead, in 1851 Hart accepted a contract to furnish flour to the same three posts plus the escort to the United States Boundary Commission for one year at twelve-and-a-half cents per pound. Here again Hart would have liked to have had more, even though he always managed to do better than his competitors.<sup>14</sup>

Naturally, Hart strongly protested the Army's decision in 1851 to move the troops from the Post Opposite El Paso and San Elizario to Fort Fillmore, some 40 miles to the north. Hart's opposition, however, elicited only a reply from an Army officer that it was "not unreasonable to suppose that the removal of troops interfered very much with his interests and expectations." But Hart's losses were probably not as great as he expected, as the Army honored its contract with him, and he continued to supply the newly established post at Fort Fillmore.<sup>15</sup>

It will be recalled that Benjamin F. Coons' contract with the Army contained a provision whereby he would be in charge of transporting supplies

to the new post. Early in 1850 Coons went to San Antonio where he immediately impressed the merchants there with the advantages of a trade route across Texas in comparison with the road from Missouri to Santa Fe and El Paso del Norte. The trip from Independence, Missouri, to El Paso del Norte, he pointed out, took 80 days, while the trip from San Antonio could be done in 50. The annual trade with Chihuahua, he emphasized, amounted to 625 tons of freight worth \$1,000 a ton. Coons then entered into partnership with Lewis and Groesbeeck, well known commission merchants, with the object of obtaining the larger share of the freight business between San Antonio and El Paso del Norte in the transportation of military supplies to the Post Opposite El Paso.<sup>16</sup>

Coons ran into all sorts of problems toward the end of the summer of 1850, resulting in tremendous financial losses. A train of 300 teams left San Antonio around the middle of April, but four months later it was still 250 miles short of its destination. As it entered the trans-Pecos region, water became scarce, the grass was parched, and the teamsters, many of whom were rogues, fugitives, and footloose ex-soldiers of the Mexican War, became extremely troublesome. Learning of these details, Major Van Horne on September 1 wrote his superior that while part of the train might reach its destination by September 10, "the remainder God knows when." "The oxen are perishing," he continued, "and Coons' train is in wretched condition, he himself doubtful whether it will ever reach here." One month later Van Horne wrote that the whole system of transporting supplies seemed very defective. Much of the merchandise had been damaged, and the teamsters had used government supplies for their own subsistence.<sup>17</sup>

Adding to Coons' problems was a transaction he made with a notorious adventurer named Parker H. French. On August 18 Coons sold eighteen wagons, mules, and horses to French for the tidy sum of \$17,720.95, but the bills of credit drawn on Aspinwall and Howland of New York which Coons received turned out to be forgeries. The last segments of Coons' train finally arrived late in November, but Van Horne reported that it was of very inferior quality, and that the hard bread, bacon, and port were unfit for use. So much had been consumed by the command escort, combined with the demands likely to be made by starving Indians, Van Horne added, that the supply was very short and would not last long.<sup>18</sup>

Realizing that the whole enterprise had been a complete failure, Coons sold twelve wagons to George Wentworth for \$3,000 in October to stave off his creditors, and then left for California. Here he was able to repair his fortunes somewhat, possibly with the help of a loan from his brother, and in early 1851 he returned to the El Paso area. By this time Coons' Ranch was occasionally called Franklin, presumably after his middle name, and so it was usually called for another decade or so, even though a



Fort Bliss was under construction at Magoffinsville when this photo was made.  
(*Courtesy National Archives*)

post office was established in 1852 naming the settlement El Paso, Texas.<sup>19</sup>

Coons had been back in the El Paso area only a short time before he began to run into more hard luck. On July 12, 1851, Major E. Backus recommended the removal of troops from the Coons' Ranch site, which he had found objectionable for a number of reasons. He wrote:

The unusual expenditures to which the government has been subjected at this post have induced me to inquire into some of the most prominent causes which have produced them and to search for an appropriate remedy. A brief examination has satisfied me that the position occupied by the troops tends greatly to augment these expenditures, and that by removing them up or down the river a few miles only, you will add to the safety, health, and comfort of the troops, and seriously diminish the unnecessary outlay of funds.<sup>20</sup>

The major then proceeded to list his objections: 1. It was not defensible even against musketry; 2. It afforded no appropriate accommodations for troops, and the annual rent which had been increased to \$4,900 he called "an exorbitant charge"; 3. It afforded neither fuel nor grazing, and the Army was paying \$6,160 a year for wood and \$7,000 for hay; 4. It afforded no timber; and 5. It afforded no opportunities for farming. The major concluded by saying that adequate protection of officials and settlers in

the area could be accomplished by one officer, fifteen men, a good guard-house, an acre or two of land, and some fast horses.<sup>21</sup>

Word of the possible withdrawal of troops spread rapidly around the area, causing conditions bordering on panic. Initiated by Charles W. Ogden and Simeon Hart, a petition, signed by 21 of the local citizenry, strongly protested the move. It emphasized the strategic importance of the Pass the inevitable renewal of Indian depredations which would result in incalculable losses of lives and property. Furthermore, Ben F. Coons, in an interesting document dated August 26, 1851, published here for the first time, submitted the following proposal to the Army:

Paso del Norte  
Aug. 26, 1851

Col. —

I have the honor to submit to you the following proposition, and ask from you a consideration of the same, upon its merits.

I propose to furnish the quarters and grounds which are now occupied by the troops at this place free of rent for one year.

And further I propose to give a lot of ground suitable for the erection of barracks, storehouses, etc. and adjoining the same a lot of farming land to the extent of two hundred and fifty acres, the same to be selected by the commanding officer, to be occupied by the United States for the period of twenty years free of all charges and rents, and at the expiration of said term the property and premises as they may then exist shall revert to me, my heirs or assigns, the U. States having the privilege of purchasing the same at a valuation to be then made, or by agreement of the parties concerned.

I remain very respectfully  
Your Ob't Sv't

Ben F. Coons  
[Signature]

Bvt. Col. E. V. Sumner  
1st U. S. Drag. Comdg.  
9th Mil. Dept.  
Fort Union, N.M.

Although the local commander, Major Gouverneur Morris, recommended that the proposal be accepted, his superior in Santa Fe rejected it, and the troops were moved in September, 1851, to Fort Fillmore, some 40 miles to the north.<sup>22</sup> As a result of this loss of income, Coons was unable to

make the payments on his property and it was then repossessed by its former owner, Juan María Ponce de León. On his death in 1852 the property passed to his wife and daughter, who sold it two years later to William T. Smith for \$10,000. Coons left for California and never again returned to the El Paso area. The only thing he left was his middle name.<sup>23</sup>

As the merchants had predicted, the withdrawal of troops and lifting of the military protection left the El Paso frontier defenseless and exposed. "We are in a sad and dreadful state," wrote one shortly after the troops had left, "as the Indians murder and rob almost at our very doors." County officials hastily organized a local Citizens' Committee on Indian Depredations, and petitions were drafted and addressed to state and national authorities urging immediate relief and protection. Otherwise, it was pointed out, the constituents were doomed to destruction. One petition, written from San Elizario, the county seat, to Governor P. H. Bell of Texas, and containing about 100 signatures (most of which were Mexican names, almost all of which were written in the same hand), stated that the Mexican population of San Elizario would have to return to Mexico unless the protection of United State laws and military forces was forthcoming. Another petition, addressed to President Millard Fillmore and bearing eleven signatures, emphasized the thriving agriculture and commerce which had brought prosperity to the area amounting to not less than a million dollars. Since the withdrawal of the troops, it added, trade had become paralyzed, and many merchants had moved to Mexico for their safety.<sup>24</sup>

On August 5, 1852, the local citizens' committee addressed another letter to Governor Bell, stating that conditions had become even more deplorable since the previous petition was sent. A treaty signed with the Indians at Fort Webster near the Santa Rita copper mines, said the committee, had done more harm than good. The policy, the group contended, was to effect peaceful relations with one settlement merely to have the facilities of a market open to them for the disposition of property stolen from adjacent settlements such as those in the El Paso area. The committee enclosed letters signed by James Magoffin, Henry Jacobs, and Hugh Stephenson citing the losses they had sustained in recent months. Magoffin said the Indians had raided his corrals at Magoffinsville a number of times, and on one occasion took 60 mules within 150 yards of his house. Moreover, they had raided his ranch at Canutillo twice and had taken all his cattle and farm animals. Jacobs cited livestock losses suffered by the boundary commission, and Stephenson said his livestock losses totalled more than \$3,000. Immediate action was necessary, said the committee; but it would be more than a year before anything would be done.<sup>25</sup>

Finally, in October, 1853, Joel L. Ankrim, district judge of the

Eleventh Judicial District, addressed a letter directly to the military authorities. He listed the losses suffered in the El Paso area during the past two years, pointing out that there had been 23 attacks from Indians—about one a month on the average—resulting in the loss of lives and property, the disruption of business, and a general feeling of insecurity. His letter was then forwarded to Colonel Joseph K. F. Mansfield, who subsequently incorporated it into his report of an inspection he made of western military posts. Mansfield recommended that a post be established opposite the town of El Paso del Norte either at Magoffinsville or Smith's Ranch, the first being the preferable location.<sup>26</sup>

Ankrim's report and Mansfield's recommendation produced results. In January, 1854, a post was established at Magoffinsville, and four companies of the Eighth Infantry under the command of Major E. B. Alexander were quartered in buildings owned by James Magoffin. In March the name of the post was officially changed to Fort Bliss in honor of Major William W. S. Bliss, Zachary Taylor's chief of staff during the Mexican War who later became his son-in-law. This first Fort Bliss, memorialized by its replica on the grounds of the present Fort Bliss, ushered in a new era which featured a reduction in the losses of lives and property from Indian depredations, improved merchant-military relations, and assured a greater degree of safety and security for the local citizenry than it had known for some time.<sup>27</sup>

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## THE SLATERS

by Carl Hertzog

When I first arrived in El Paso in 1923, one of the most prominent citizens was Captain H. D. Slater. He was the owner and editor of the *El Paso Herald*. I heard frequently that he was a tyrant in the editorial room; he had specific rules for punctuations and capitalization. Heaven help the reporter who left out a comma or used capitals for emphasis. However, Captain Slater was a good citizen and used his influence for good, as he saw it. He campaigned against the red light district which cost him the advertising of the White House Department Store (the "madames" were their best customers). He promoted the building of Scenic Drive which was originally built with prison labor, the chain gang so to speak.

One very important help to El Paso that is little known involved the approval of Elephant Butte Dam by the U.S. Congress. My facts are not accurate, but this is the way I heard it: There had been much politicking and all kinds of support assembled in favor of the dam until it was considered a cinch to pass the Congress. At the last minute, it was learned that the whole proposition had to be printed, something like a legal brief, before Congress could act, and the Congress was scheduled to vote on it the next day! How could this possibly be printed overnight? Slater to the rescue. He had lived in Washington for some time and knew his way around. He used his influence with a Washington printer to put on a night crew and the necessary pamphlets were set up and printed by the time Congress met the next morning, satisfying the legal requirement that had been overlooked. Without the printed transcript, Congress could not have acted and a postponement might have been disastrous.

There were three Slaters influencing El Paso in those days. Captain Slater's sister, Miss Ora, was the principal of El Paso School for Girls (now Radford School), a rather high-toned private school for a town a thousand miles from nowhere. Capt. Slater's wife, Elsie McElroy Slater, besides having a beautiful garden, was also a good writer and published several charming little booklets: *A Hundred Flowers of the Mexican Border at El Paso* (1933), *Thirteen Ferns of the Mexican Border* (1939), *Index to Botanical Water Colors at International Museum*, and later, *El Paso Birds* (1946). In addition to his newspaper writing, Capt. Slater wrote small pamphlets which he mailed out in lieu of Christmas cards. The subject might be his defense of a political idea or a report on his trip to Italy.

All the Slaters were intellectuals and most El Pasoans thought they were snooty. I'm sure that the Slaters thought they were superior and better educated than anyone else in El Paso. Perhaps they were.

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Carl Hertzog, best known as one of America's most renowned book designers, won a second place award in the 1982 Historical Memories contest of the Historical Society with this article.

During my years of hard work in obscurity, I am sure none of the Slaters knew that I existed. But fate entred in and, eventually, I had pleasant experiences with each of them, one at a time.

The first call was from Miss Ora who had retired and lived in an apartment house on Prospect Avenue. I don't remember the exact date but it must have been in 1939 or 1940. Probably she heard about me from Maud Sullivan, our great El Paso librarian, who was encouraging me and my work. Miss Ora wanted to order some stationery. I had to go to see her; she didn't come to the shop like everybody else. I was shoe-stringing a business on West San Antonio Street where the Civic Center is now, and we were just emerging from the great depression, so I kow-towed to all potential customers.

Miss Slater was a little dictatorial, but she had a pleasant smile and a sparkle in her eye that belied her 80 years. I spent more time than the amount of business justified but I enjoyed it. Later I printed a clever Christmas greeting she had found: some elves grinning "Hist! The Spirit of Christmas."

In August of 1941 I finished a little book which I thought would elevate me to literary equality with the erudite Miss Ora Slater. It was printed for the rare book department of the University at Austin, entitled *Letters: Sidney Lanier to Col. John G. James*. Sidney Lanier was the famous poet (1842-1881). Col. James was the first president of Texas A & M College and quite literary for a military man. Our book was a limited edition [165 copies] but I was allowed to make a few extra "sample" copies. I took one of these to Miss Ora.

She had moved to a nice little house on Corto Street in Sunset Heights. I was feeling quite intellectual as I walked in and presented her with this sample of my latest work. Her usual smile changed to surprise. She couldn't believe the coincidence.

As we sat down, she hesitated and then began, "When I was a senior at Wellesley College, I was selected to represent the student body at a very special reception in the president's suite. I remember the room very well. There were large bay windows that looked out on the beautiful lake. Most of the faculty was present, also some trustees. We were assembled to hear Mrs. Sidney Lanier read some of her husband's poems!" An amazing coincidence. I didn't expect Miss Ora to be connected to my book.

My experiences with Elsie McElroy Slater were quite different. She phoned for an appointment and then was driven to the office by her chauffeur. By this time (1944) I had progressed to a bigger shop on Stanton Street.

Mrs. Slater had already published two little books (*Flowers and Ferns*)

and now she had a manuscript on *Birds*. She was very easy to deal with and we decided to produce a small book entitled *El Paso Birds* (1945).

We soon had the type set and galley proofs were sent to her. In a few days she phoned and asked me to come by to go over the proofs which needed some corrections. I was very busy at the time but left the office at 2 p.m., telling everybody I would be back in an hour. Mrs. Slater had the proofs spread out on the dining room table and wanted to explain each correction in detail, why this bird's color was beige and not tan, or why this bird's song was plaintive and not just soft. Suddenly, a voice in the next room bellowed out, "That's not true. I looked it up in *Peterson* this



This photograph of Elsie Slater in her later years is among her papers, watercolors, sketches, photographs and notebooks that were presented to the University of Texas at El Paso by her family. The materials are included in the Herbarium Collection of the University's Resource Collections of the Laboratory for Environmental Biology.

morning, etc....etc...." That was Capt. Slater whom she called Hughes, with the final "s" pronounced. I never heard of anyone else calling him that. And, since his middle name was DeCourcy, I could understand why he preferred "H.D."

A week later we had the corrections all set and the type measured into pages with the illustrations Mrs. Slater "borrowed" from the U.S. Biological Survey. From the previous experience, I knew I could not do a hit-and-run with the proofs and planned to take the afternoon off. I made a date and took my wife and spent a pleasant afternoon. The proofs were soon approved and we had tea in the delightful garden with curving stone walkways that sloped to the back fence with some trees and shrubs at the lower level.

The Slaters lived in a small house high above the street with an alley on the east side and two or three lots to the west. First there was the garden, and then Capt. Slater's "castle" at 520 Prospect Avenue which he had worked on for 30 years and never finished. It was a massive structure of cut flintstone, three stories high. There were stairs to the roof from which you could almost see Chihuahua City. I never got into the castle until all the Slaters were dead. But it helped to make the garden more private when we spent the afternoon with *El Paso Birds*.

Within a week after the bird book was finished, the head of the local Audubon Society gleefully marked up a copy with 20 or 30 errors and presented it to the Public Library. This bird "didn't sing like that" and that bird "had the wrong color," a Scissors-tailed Flycatcher "was never seen north of Fort Stockton," etc., etc. The critic cited references to back up her statements. I made a record of these but I never bothered to look them up. She was probably right, but I will always believe that Mrs. Slater got more pleasure from the *Birds* than the nit-pickin' expert ever did. The stories are delightful and I have always been proud of this little book.

While I was still in the small shop on West San Antonio Street and Capt. Slater had retired, he started bringing me little jobs. His sister had probably recommended me. I printed several folders and pamphlets for him, which he mailed to his friends. The text might be about collecting books in Italy or his opinions about current political trends. He always marked up the copy newspaper style: "18 pt. caps (for the heading), 8 pt. leaded, 15 ems (for the body type)," etc. Remembering his reputation as owner-editor, I did exactly as he marked, resisting any impulse to pep up the style (my profession) or enlarge the type. He told several people that I was an excellent designer. He knew he was eccentric and referred to himself as the "ogre of Sunny Top Hill."

After Miss Ora and Mrs. Slater had both died, Capt. Slater lived alone in the little house. His neighbor across the alley knew that he wasn't eating right and insisted that he come over every morning for breakfast. I don't know how long this went on but when he died, the Albert Murdochs became custodians of the property, including the mansion. I was notified that Capt. Slater had left me a box of books and that I could have anything I wanted in the big house. Ethel Murdoch asked that I come in the evening after work so that her husband or son could show me through the big house.

We made an appointment and my wife and I went one evening for a memorable tour. We went across the alley, under the back porch of the Slater residence which was on high ground, across the once beautiful garden now grown up in weeds, and came to a door on the lower level of the big house about halfway back from the front. As Mr. Murdoch unlocked the door, we began to feel spooky. It was a dark and dreary night. The light switch produced a 25-watt naked globe and there was inch-thick dust on everything, which added to the eerie feeling.

Straight ahead was a stairway that turned halfway up. On the second floor, the room on the right was finished but on the left, the studding and water pipes were still showing. We went on up to the third floor with only a flashlight showing creaky stairs, and everything still dusty and musty. I expected that any minute, the Hounds of Baskervilles would jump out at us.

There was better lighting on the top floor, as Capt. Slater has used this as a studio, even though rooms on the lower floors were never completed. There was a large room on the east side with lots of windows where he did sculpture, and off to the west was a large room lined with bookshelves well filled.

There were two boxes of books in the middle of the floor, one marked for me and one for Baxter Polk. My box contained some incunabula and other volumes printed by famous printers of the 16th and 17th centuries. Baxter's box featured the theatre which was his forte, although he worked as a librarian. In each box Capt. Slater had carefully selected the books to fit our special tastes.

Since I had been told I could have anything I wanted, I rubbed my hands in anticipation as I saw the bookshelves. But I was sadly disappointed. There was not one book on Southwestern history — mostly books on war, especially World War I which was where the title "captain" came from. He was in the fighting in the Saint Mihiel and Argonne-Meuse sectors in France. I couldn't understand the absence of books about the Southwest until later I learned that his son, John, from California had been there and had taken 30 boxes of books, after saying that he didn't want anything!

Before we left the mansion, we found two pictures we liked and took. Then we went into the little house in the lower level of the back yard, where Mrs. Slater worked with flowers, and I found several packages of *El Paso Birds*, the book I had printed for Mrs. Slater several years before. I don't know if she was inhibited by the "Audubon" criticism or just didn't want to be bothered with the distribution. Anyway, I made good use of them over a period of 20 years, giving them to visitors and newcomers.

This reminiscence wouldn't be complete if I failed to mention Capt. Slater's sculpture. He was thorough and competent and associated with Urbici Soler and Gutzon Borglum, both top sculptors. In the studio I saw a circular platform on casters with a calibrated dial. This was for the model to stand on as she posed for a portrait. He could turn the model an exact number of degrees as he made photographs to analyze the best pose. He had his own darkroom and developed his own film.

There was not one piece of sculpture visible. I understood that he had asked the Murdochs to destroy every piece, including several unfinished portraits, just another facet of this interesting and influential citizen of El Paso. Rumor had it that his most popular figures were young girls nude.

All the Slaters made lasting contributions to the culture of El Paso and I am glad I got to know them, even if briefly.

#### AUTHOR'S NOTE:

Hughes DeCourcy Slater was born in Southwestern Virginia in 1874 and grew up in Washington, D.C., when it was a small city. His first work was in writing, two years in New York, then sickness (TB) brought him to El Paso in 1896. His sister Ora gave up a good teaching job in the East to take care of him. He married Elsie Pomeroy McElroy in 1899. He bought stock in the *El Paso Herald* in 1898, and soon became editor and publisher, which position he had held for 31 years when he sold the *Herald*; he also owned the *El Paso Times* from 1925 to 1928. He retired in 1929 and took up the study of sculpture in a serious way. He produced 40 figures of creditable significance. Mrs. Slater died in 1952 and Capt. Slater in 1958. They were both buried in Mountain Park, New Mexico. Miss Ora Slater died in 1956. The Slaters' son, John McElroy Slater, is a research engineer living in California. He has made contributions to inertial guidance systems for missiles, planes and submarines.

## THE EL PASO SHARPS: ARM OF THE BORDERLANDS

by Wayne R. Austerman

Firearms have played an important role in American history, for throughout a large part of our national experience we have been a people in contention with the wilderness. From 1607 through 1890 successive generations of westering Americans learned that their survival often depended mainly upon the quality of their weapons and the skill with which they used them. Certain areas of our country can claim a special identity with a particular style or type of firearm. Pennsylvania and Kentucky both share an ancient kinship with the flintlock longrifle of the 18th century frontier. Connecticut can claim parentage of both the Colt Revolver and the Winchester rifle. Harpers Ferry, Virginia, and Springfield, Massachusetts, hosted national armories that produced superb military arms throughout the 19th century.

El Paso, too, can claim a unique bond with one of the most famous firearms in American history. While the weapon in question saw service all over the continent after 1850, its initial reputation as a piece of superior accuracy and dependability was forged along the desert trails that led soldiers, emigrants, and expressmen into the blue shadows of the Pass of the North.

In the wake of the Mexican War the United States found that the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo had failed to clearly define the new border with its late opponent, and that a joint survey would have to be performed if future disputes over the limits of national sovereignty were to be avoided. In 1849 John R. Bartlett of Providence, Rhode Island, became the government's unlikely choice as head of the United States Boundary Commission. A book dealer by profession, and a keen amateur ethnologist, Bartlett proved to be an observant, if sometimes bumbling, leader of the boundary survey.<sup>1</sup>

During the summer of 1850, Bartlett busied himself with equipping his 111-man expedition with all the articles it would need for a long sojourn in the desolate southwestern country. While much of his gear came from government stocks, Bartlett acquired some of his firearms from civilian manufacturers. A few of them were purchased from Albert S. Nippes of Mill Creek, Pennsylvania. Nippes was manufacturing a revolutionary new breechloading rifle that had been designed by Christian Sharps, a former employee of the federal arsenal at Harpers Ferry, Virginia. In September, 1848, Sharps had been awarded a patent on his simple but innovative design. The rifle was sturdily built and easily adapted to large-

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Dr. Wayne R. Austerman, a recipient of the Eugene O. Porter Award for one of many *Password* articles, taught military history at the University of Texas at El Paso in 1981-82.

scale manufacture. A movable breechblock slid downward when the trigger guard was rotated forward. It exposed the breech end of the barrel, thus allowing the insertion of a combustible paper or linen cartridge in the chamber. When the sharp edge of the breechblock rose back into place it sheared off the rear end of the cartridge and exposed the powder. When the trigger was pulled, the arm's hammer fell on a percussion cap, igniting the powder and sending the bullet down the rifled barrel. The tight-fitting bullets made for increased accuracy, and the rapidly manipulated breech mechanism permitted a rate of fire of five shots per minute.<sup>2</sup>

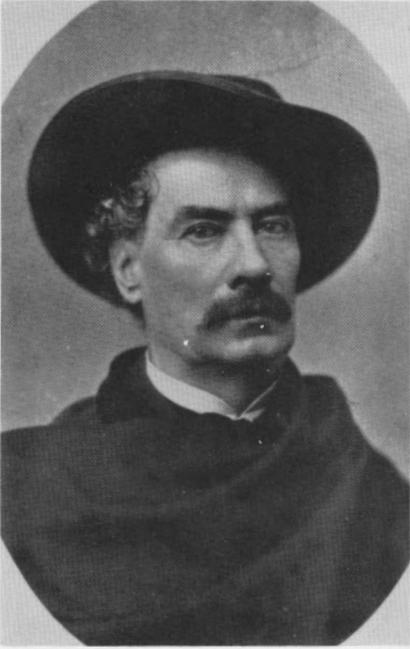
Bartlett apparently purchased a limited number of the new weapons in both the short carbine and full-length rifle versions. The commissioner had his private carriage fitted out as a mobile arsenal. A shotgun hung from the vehicle's ceiling while "to one of the uprights was affixed my rifle, one of Sharp's repeaters; a heavy revolver, one of Colt's six-shooters, was strapped to each door."<sup>3</sup>

Bartlett's expedition sailed from New York City in August, 1850, and reached San Antonio, Texas, on September 27. By mid-October the men were crossing the plains near modern San Angelo as they pressed on to make a rendezvous with their Mexican counterparts at El Paso. Somewhere in the Concho River country they met a band of Lipan Apaches and treated them to a friendly demonstration of their firepower. Chief Chipota of the Lipans was plainly awed by the whites' armament. "My Sharp's rifle which loaded at the breech and primed itself, surpassed all his previous conceptions," recalled Bartlett. John C. Cremony, the expedition's interpreter and guide, intimidated a skeptical Indian who doubted the power of the new weapons. "His admiration broke out into emphatic expression when he witnessed the precision and reach of our Sharp's rifles, and the rapidity with which they could be loaded and fired," noted Cremony.<sup>4</sup>

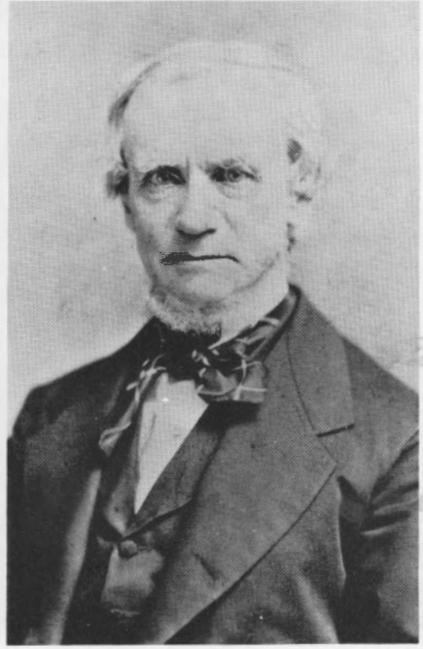
The Sharps repeatedly proved its worth as the party moved westward into the Trans-Pecos region of Texas. Cremony related how "I was accustomed to ride ahead in search of game, being always armed to the teeth with two belt and two holster six-shooters, a Sharp's carbine and a large Bowie knife."<sup>5</sup>

On November 13 the commission arrived in El Paso, and remained in the area until April 19, 1851, as Bartlett made further preparations for the survey west to California. The arrival of the Sharps rifle in that border settlement must have generated a lot of interest among the resident frontiersmen. Hunting and Indian-fighting were normal facts of life in the community, and a good rifle was a necessity for any man who struck out into the mountains and deserts that lapped the Rio Grande.

It was probably during Bartlett's stay in El Paso that one of its most



John C. Cremony



John R. Bartlett

*(Courtesy Arizona Historical Society)*

celebrated citizens first made the acquaintance of the Sharps rifle. Captain Henry Skillman, a former freighter and scout, was operating an informal courier service between San Antonio and El Paso at that time. We hear of him being in San Antonio with news from the Pass on February 17, 1850, and by late September through December he was back on the border. It is entirely possible that he met Bartlett and Cremony upon their arrival in town during that period. Neither of them recorded an encounter with Skillman at that time, but such an incident was not unlikely under the circumstances.<sup>6</sup>

We do have a documented record of Skillman's contact with the Bartlett party after its departure from El Paso. On July 11, 1851, the plainsman rode out from the settlement and headed west for 200 miles to reach the surveyors' camp near the Gila River. After a two-day visit he returned to El Paso bearing dispatches from the expedition. Perhaps Skillman and Cremony sat down over a jug of the potent Pass brandy during his stay and then strolled out into the desert to wager on their skill with the new rifle.<sup>7</sup>

In November, 1851, Skillman received a formal contract from the United States Post Office Department to begin a scheduled mail service between San Antonio and Santa Fe via El Paso. It would be a dangerous

enterprise, and Skillman obtained the best weapons available for his employees. The circumstances suggest that during a subsequent trip to the East in November and December, 1852, he contacted the Sharps Rifle Manufacturing Company of Hartford, Connecticut, and purchased a crate of carbines for use on his stage line.<sup>8</sup>

It may have been on Skillman's initial westbound trip after returning to Texas that he first impressed his enemies with the power of his lethal new acquisitions. The mail party had crossed the Pecos and forged deeply into what were then known as the Limpia Mountains. A band of Mescalero Apaches attacked the whites as they neared a grove of oaks that garnished the rocky base of a slope that flanked the road. The Texans halted and opened fire. The Apaches retired to what they deemed to be a safe distance out of range, dismounted, and began to taunt the expressmen. One cocky warrior stood behind his horse, leaned over the saddle, and dared the whites to come out in the open and fight like men.

Skillman slipped a combustible paper cartridge in the breech of his Sharps carbine, trimmed its sights, and aimed carefully. The Sharps barked and the Apache heeled over backward with a .52 caliber bullet through his head. His stunned comrades picked up his body and quickly retreated beyond the reach of what became known as Skillman's "medicine gun." The frontiersmen raised a cheer and swung out into the road again for a clear run into El Paso.<sup>9</sup>

This encounter became a minor legend, and Skillman liked to boast of his feat to his drinking companions at one of the army posts along the mail route. "He had a good supply of whisky aboard," recalled Lieutenant Zenas R. Bliss, "and repeated the story several times, taking a drink each time. He said he saw the Indian standing there . . . and fired and knocked him ten feet. He then took another drink, and in repeating the story said he knocked him twenty yards. He kept repeating the story and his drinks, each time increasing the distance he fired and the number of feet he knocked him, and finally closed the recital by saying, 'When I drew a bead on that Indian he was about eleven hundred yards off and was looking over his horse so that I could only see his head, and I took him right between the eyes, and sir, I knocked him more than forty rods.' The scene of the fight is still known as Skillman's Grove."<sup>10</sup>

Skillman's line did not remain unchallenged by the Apaches even after that sobering exchange. The carbines continued to prove their worth, and in June, 1853, the contractor sent a letter to their manufacturers, lauding their product. "The ten Sharps' carbines purchased of you," he reported, "were all put to immediate use in arming my escort, and for range, accuracy, and rapidity of firing, they are far superior to any arm known." Skillman declared, "having been a frontier man for fourteen years, I had occasion to look after a bosom companion to stand by me in case of life or

death . . . in my search after such a comforter, I have found no arm that in all its attributes begins to compare with the Sharps' arm and for army, navy, caravan or sporting service it is sure to take and hold the front rank."<sup>11</sup>

Skillman's enthusiasm for the arm continued to be well justified. On November 14, 1854, he and his men were attacked by a large force of Apaches while camped at El Muerto, a spring hidden in a narrow mountain canyon north of modern Valentine, Texas. The Indians pressed the attack from eleven o'clock in the morning until sundown. None of the mail party was hurt, but the Indians made the mistake of killing one of Skillman's favorite mules, and he exacted a grim retribution for it. "Capt. Skillman has a fine gun," related a contemporary account of the incident, "with which he considers he has a 'dead thing' on any Indian at three hundred yards, and in this fight he is said to have killed three in that distance—there were three that he got and others that were doubtless killed but not known to be killed." A.C. Rand, a participant in the skirmish, reported that Skillman fired ten to fifteen rounds from his Sharps at a group of Apaches assembled on a hilltop 600 yards away. The range made it hard to verify hits, but Rand recalled that he "surely wounded some Indians."<sup>12</sup>

The Sharps seemed to be the standard shoulder arm in Skillman's service. In the spring of 1854 traveler Frederick Law Olmsted was visiting Fort Inge, near Uvalde, Texas, when he met the westbound mail. "The



Advertisement for the Sharps Rifle.

train is attended by a mounted guard of six men," he recorded, "armed with Sharp's rifles and Colt's repeaters."<sup>13</sup>

Late in 1854 or early in 1855 Skillman transferred his contract to veteran merchant and freighter George H. Giddings of San Antonio. Giddings quickly joined Skillman in praise of the breechloaders. "It affords me great pleasure," he wrote on February 10, 1855, "to bear testimony from actual experience to the merits of Sharps' rifle. I have used it for two years, a part of the time over my mail route, and it has proved a savior to myself and my men, when any other arm would have failed me. As for killing bear, deer, etc., I will pit Sharps' rifle against all other arms known."<sup>14</sup>

There are several documented references to Giddings' employment of the Sharps. Only four months after he penned his testimonial a coach was ambushed by the Apaches north of El Paso at the Laguna del Muerto above Las Cruces. The driver and the guard were killed, and the Mescaleros took two Colts and a brace of Sharps as booty. In October of the same year passenger E. C. Allen noted that the mail caravan from El Paso to Bexar was accompanied by eleven men, well armed with Colt revolvers and Sharps rifles. In 1858 Ohioan Phocion R. Way traveled on the line and commented, "All our guards have Sharps rifles — the best and the most efficient guns ever invented. You can load and fire them five or six times in a minute. I will never travel through such a country as this again without one of them."<sup>15</sup>

The news of the rifle's fine service spread from Texas to other quarters of the frontier. In January, 1855, Jacob Hall, the mail contractor on the route between Independence, Missouri, and Santa Fe, New Mexico, reported that he had equipped his men with the arm, and noted that he had "frequently killed deer, antelope and buffalo at a distance of over four hundred yards." Explorer and surveyor Andrew B. Gray used the Sharps on two trips across the continent to California, and reported that "with ten men, a Negro, and a Mexican, I kept at bay one hundred and forty Apaches, all fully armed, just on the eve of an attack on Gov. Gardner's ranch in Sonora. I look upon it as far the best rifle and the only proper one for mounted men that I have ever seen."<sup>16</sup>

The frontiersmen's enthusiasm was noted by the Army, and on January 9, 1852, the Ordnance Department ordered 200 Sharps carbines for the dragoon regiments on the Southwestern frontier. By February, 1853, the weapons had been delivered and Colonel H. K. Craig, Chief of Ordnance, could report to the department commander in New Mexico that "I have given orders to have 60 Sharps carbines . . . sent to the Ordnance Depot at Fort Union." Other shipments of the arms were sent to the depot in San Antonio for issue to the troops patrolling the trail west to El Paso.<sup>17</sup>

One of the units fortunate enough to receive a small supply of the car-



Skillman's Grove

bines was Captain Richard S. Ewell's company of the 1st Dragoons at Fort Thorn, New Mexico. The dragoons obtained their weapons in September, 1853, and by March of the following year Ewell classified them as "superior to any firearm yet furnished the dragoons." The handy little carbines proved their value again in late December, 1854, when Ewell's company sortied from its camp at Las Lunas in pursuit of hostile Mescaleros.<sup>18</sup>

Ewell's 80 troopers rode east to the Pecos and then swung southward to enter the Capitan Mountains. On January 13 they rendezvoused with another mixed column of dragoons and infantry from Fort Fillmore, led by Captain Henry W. Stanton. Four days later the combined command was moving up the Peñasco on the eastern slope of the Sacramento Mountains, skirmishing with the Indians as it went. Fifteen of the braves fell to Ewell's carbines and the infantrymen's muskets. On the afternoon of the 18th Ewell rode into an abandoned Apache ranchería. Deciding to camp there for the night, he dispatched Captain Stanton and his dragoons to reconnoiter another cluster of deserted wickiups in an adjoining valley about 500 yards away.<sup>19</sup>

Stanton spotted a small group of Indians and pursued them up the timbered slopes, riding squarely into an ambush. At first Stanton tried to dismount his men and form a skirmish line in the brush, "but the Indians being in too great force he mounted and directed his party to retreat, remaining in the rear himself firing his Sharps carbine, when he received a shot in the head and was instantly killed." Another dragoon died with the

captain, but the rest of the patrol was able to withdraw safely. The Mescaleros paused only to gather up the two soldiers' carbines and then melted into the mountains. Ewell pursued them for two more days and then turned back for home, having driven the Indians out of their winter camps.<sup>20</sup>

Ewell and his dragoons continued to harry the Apaches throughout New Mexico and into Arizona. On June 27, 1857, the balding, irascible captain and three companies of the regiment surprised a large camp of Coyoteros on the north bank of the Rio Gila. Nearly 40 warriors fell before the dragoons' sabres and carbines in a total rout of the Indians. By this time the small lot of breechloaders that had been issued to Ewell's company for testing had undergone a thorough period of field trials, and the following February Ewell sent a laudatory report to the Ordnance Department, closing it by remarking, "I urgently request that my company may be armed with them." Major Enoch Steen, the regiment's commander, added his endorsement to the report and asked that the entire regiment receive the Sharps.<sup>21</sup>

The Sharps remained in service with the Army for the next decade and a half. Nearly 100,000 of the carbines were purchased during the Civil War, and after being converted to take metallic cartridges it soldiered on well into the 1870s with the frontier regulars. Various civilian models of the rifle equipped the hordes of hunters that descended on the bison herds after the Civil War and eventually broke the back of the Plains Indians'



El Muerto Canyon

## HISTORIC FOREST RANGER EXAMINATION

by Dr. Elliott S. Barker

After I graduated from high school in 1905, I developed a desire to become a U. S. Forest Ranger. The regional forester advised me by letter that I would have to wait until I became 21 and then take, and pass, the Civil Service Examination. I was then 18 and would have to wait at least three years.

The ranger examination became the key to my future career, and four waiting periods were involved; first, wait until I became 21; then wait indefinitely for an examination to be held; next wait for months for examination grades report; then if I passed, wait until there was a vacancy. Patience is a virtue for which I was not noted. I remember those waiting months very well.

During the waiting periods I continued to work on our ranch, at Dad's sawmill, as a cowboy, outfitting and guiding hunting and fishing parties into the back country, hunting and trapping predator animals, including grizzly bears, to stop their depredation on livestock. From early boyhood, I had been interested in wildlife and these jobs gave me some valuable experience.

At last on December 25, 1907, I celebrated my 21st birthday, a personal historical event to remember. On April 5, 1908, I received notice that a Forest Ranger examination would be held in Santa Fe on April 23 and 24. It would consist of a one-day field test and a one-day written test. I felt that my work above described would surely be good preparation for it. It seemed there was little I could do to cram for it. Fortunately, I had helped Forest Ranger Tom Stewart make a Forest homestead compass survey during which he showed me how to operate the compass. Yet, with only a high school education, I was a bit leery about the written examination. What I had been waiting for was here at last and I would do my best.

We knew snowdrifts would block the trail over the mountains to Santa Fe, a two-day horseback trip. We lived 25 miles from Las Vegas, and Dad wanted me to ride to there and take the train to Santa Fe, but I objected. I felt that the field day examiner would be impressed favorably if I rode in leading a pack horse with camp equipment. So I went that way, one day to Las Vegas and two long days to Santa Fe, camping out overnight.

In Santa Fe I put my horses in a livery stable and stayed overnight in a hotel costing a dollar for the room and 50 cents each for supper and breakfast. That morning I saddled and packed up and rode to the examination site in the north edge of town, perhaps where the Major's foot-

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Dr. Elliott S. Barker of Santa Fe, formerly of Las Cruces, was co-winner of second place honors in the Historical Memories contest for this article.

ball field is today. My friend Tom Stewart, by then a deputy supervisor, with about a dozen candidates, was setting up facilities. They gave me a big hand as I rode in leading my pack horse. There was some booing.

Tom Stewart's assistant was Carrol Dwyre. One contestant was Fred Lambert of Cimarron, New Mexico, who became a Forest Ranger for a short time, then became quite famous as a law officer. Two other men, whose names slip my 94-year-old memory, were veterans of Theodore Roosevelt's Rough Riders of the Cuban war. They were hired immediately without waiting to see whether or not they passed the examination. By golly, my brain suddenly became rejuvenated. Their names were Brennan and Thomas. They soon got in deep trouble and quit.

One contestant was A. W. Sypher, a 40-year-old mountain man from Kentucky and Tennessee, who knew his way around in bad company. He also was hired immediately for a district in the Jemez National Forest. The others I don't remember.

The field test consisted of pistol shooting; saddling a horse and riding out 200 yards in a walk and trot, then back in a fast gallop, dismounting and tying the horse at a hitching post; packing a horse with camp outfit including dutch oven and fire-fighting tools — ax, rake and shovel; compass surveying a five-acre irregular-shaped plot; estimating the acreage of a similar plot by pacing it off; marking timber in a pine forest to be cut, and scaling saw logs.

At that time, I was considered to be a very good shot with a rifle, but had little experience with a pistol and I didn't do so well. In saddling and riding I, of course, got a really good grade. Packing was the same way. The next packer provided some fun and work. A new packer had trouble getting his pack lashed on, and in tying the fire tools on. Finally when he thought he had finished, he looked around and saw that he had not included the 12-inch dutch oven. He wired the lid on the oven, but could find no place to put it. At last, he took a short piece of rope and ran it under the back cinch of the pack saddle and tied the bail of the oven up close to the cinch under the horse's belly. Everyone smothered their laughs and comments and waited to see what would happen. The packer got on his horse and started off, leading the pack horse which at once disapproved of the oven dangling under his belly. He jerked the lead rope out of the packer's hand and bucked the pack off, scattering the camp equipment and fire tools all over the place, but he could not get rid of the oven. Tom Stewart caught him and untied the oven. We all pitched in and soon had everything back in order for the next packer.

I did well surveying. Next was marking trees. I had seen trees marked by a ranger and so had a fairly good idea which trees to mark and which to leave to perpetuate the forest. Next and last of the field test was scaling of logs at a sawmill site a few miles from Santa Fe. My sawmill experience

## PLAQUE DESIGNATES EL PASO HIGH

El Paso High School, the oldest existing high school in the city, was visited by members of its early graduating classes for a dedication ceremony on May 20 when a Texas historical marker was unveiled. Taking part in the unveiling were Col. (ret.) James Ward, chairman of the El Paso County Historical Commission's markers committee, and his assistant chairman, Mrs. Florence Cathcart Melby, who was a member of the May, 1920, graduating class. Another plaque will be added, designating that the building has been entered in the National Register of Historic Places.

Mrs. George Kistenmacher, commission chairman, recalled the history of the building, designed by Trost and Trost and built by J.E. Morgan of El Paso and American Construction Company of Houston, completed in 1916. The first graduating class from the new building was in January, 1917.

Members of early classes attending the event were Mrs. Martha Patterson Peterson, Mrs. Lucita Escajeda Flores, Mr. and Mrs. Sam Middleton and her sister, Elizabeth Rempe, Miss Elizabeth Kelly, and Mr. and Mrs. Fred Bailey.



The City Clerk's office is shown here in the 1897 City Hall building. Percy McGhee, third from left, was city clerk from 1905 to 1909. He later became a prominent architect.

*(Photo courtesy El Paso Public Library)*

## EL PASO MEMORIES

by Edna Mae Lyons

I am Edna Mae Schreffler Chew Lyons, a native of El Paso, having been born in 1906. Part of these memories are about the place of my birth, as told to me many times by my mother, Mrs. Albertha Krause Schreffler. My parents, Albertha Mary Krause and Wade Wallace Schreffler, were married in El Paso in 1903 and they rented a duplex on Myrtle Avenue near Campbell Street for \$8 per month.

They resided there a short while when Mother decided that it was throwing money away to pay rent. With \$25 from their small savings, Mother went to the Coles Brothers Real Estate Agency and talked with Mr. A. P. Coles about buying some property. Since she had only \$25, he could not think of anything to show her. However, he called in his brother, Mr. Otis Coles, who thought he had a piece of land that might be acceptable.

He took her in his buggy and after a *long* ride, arrived at what is now the corner of Brown and California Streets. This property fronted 25 feet on California Street and extended north one block to River Street where it ended in a point, making a triangle. That was agreeable. The necessary papers were drawn up and Mother had her receipt for \$25.

My father was a plumber, working for Fraser Brothers Plumbing Company whose business was on North Oregon Street in about the 600 block. When Dad arrived home from work that day, Mother told him what she had done. Besides bargaining for the property, she had gone to the hardware store and made a down payment on a tent, stove, and the bare necessities for setting up housekeeping. With \$3, Dad was to rent a wagon the next weekend to move everything to the new homesite.

This location seems close to the center of El Paso as we know it today, but at that time, there were no houses north of Montana Avenue or east of Oregon Street except one house and a lime kiln near the present El Paso High School. The closest water supply was at the lime kiln. Dad would put a barrel in the wheelbarrow, walk to the kiln, fill the barrel, and return home. That much water had to last 24 hours.

On Dad's way home from work, he would pick up the newspaper which the carrier had left in a fork of a tree on Montana Avenue where the Museum of Art is now located. Groceries were brought out by wagon about once a week after Dad had left a list at the grocery store on his way to work.

When Mother had to go to town to shop, she put the babies in the baby buggy and walked to Yandell (then called Boulevard) and Campbell

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Edna Mae Lyons, longtime El Pasoan, tied for third place in the Historical Memories contest with this memoir.

Streets to get a streetcar to town. Service was irregular and she often walked all the way. With no graded streets or sidewalks, the walking was very rough.

We used coaloil lamps. One night when Dad blew out the lamp, the flame went down in the bowl of the lamp. He knew it would explode so he threw it to the far side of the tent and it exploded and burned part of the roof off. A corrugated tin roof was put on. Later the sides of the tent were replaced with boards and a small room was added.

The area had a few houses by now and a gentleman bought the triangle of property adjacent to ours. The ground sloped, with the high part on River Street which Mother wanted and the gentleman wanted the lower part so a swap was made. Our frame house was moved to what is now 1318 North Brown Street. A red brick house was built on part of the property and later the frame house was torn down and a light-colored brick house was built there.

A familiar sight on Brown Street during World War I was the marching of our soldiers up and down the street, as one of the training encampments was located on both sides of the street in the area where the YWCA is now located. The street was not paved and the dust was awful, but as children, we enjoyed watching the drills.

I attended Lamar School on Montana Street and El Paso High School, graduating in 1924. I was married in 1927 to Edgar Chew who passed away in 1949. I have two sons, Edgar Chew of Austin, Texas, and Eddie Wade Chew of Idaho Falls, Idaho. In 1952, I was married to Lt. Col. (Ret.) James T. Lyons, who is now deceased.

## AUNT LOTTIE

by Roberta Tidmore Wilcox

Mother was indignant. A man named Mr. Hunter had called and asked if he could come visit with her to ask her about Aunt Lottie. This was in 1936 or so, several years after she died. He said that he wrote books about people and events of the frontier west. She had said that he could come, mainly, I think, because she was curious. Then when he came he seemed to imply that Aunt Lottie, Charlotte Thurmond, Mrs. Frank Thurmond, pillar of the church and society matron, had been someone notorious; a gambler or something like that. It was insulting and ridiculous. Well, maybe she *had* helped her husband with a faro or poker table. Mother had heard that Frank Thurmond used to have a gambling house up on the river or in Silver City or somewhere, and knowing Aunt Lottie, that might be possible. But since they had lived in Deming they had been respectable ranching people. Oh, not that people didn't say you'd lose your shirt if you got in a poker game with Frank Thurmond, but he'd been dead for a long time and Mrs. Thurmond was a charming little widow with snowy, curly hair and a modest and dignified way of dressing. Her speech and manner were those of a gentlewoman.

No more was said about Mr. Hunter's peculiar ideas for some years. Then a book was published entitled *Lottie Deno* and Mother was up in arms again. Not only didn't she believe a word of it, but even worse, it quoted her by name and the quotes were largely incorrect. The book said that Charlotte Thurmond had been the notorious gambler Lottie Deno. *The Story of Lottie Deno, Her Life and Times* by J. Marvin Hunter was compiled from Mr. Hunter's notes by his children after his death. He called it "The Story of the Mysterious Aristocrat Who Became a Lady Gambler and Female Daredevil of Frontier Days." It is difficult to tell how much of his story is surmise. Mr. Hunter knew Mrs. Thurmond in Deming in 1900 when he was 20 and she was 56, and said he guessed at her past then. His father knew the gambling woman who was known as "The Angel of San Antonio" when she moved to Fort Concho, where she was known as "Mystic Maud." From Fort Concho she went on to Fort Griffin where she was known as "Lottie Deno." Fort Griffin must have been the wildest, toughest frontier town of them all, but Lottie Deno gambled there for two or three years during the 1870s. Many writers have mentioned her and all of them say more or less the same. No one knew who she was or from where she came. They all say that she held herself apart and that her appearance and manner declared her a refined and cultured gentlewoman. But she knew all the tricks of the professional

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Roberta T. Wilcox wrote this article for the Historical Memories contest and tied for third place.



Roberta and Aunt Lottie, 1927.

gambler, and it was generally agreed that she left Fort Griffin in the middle of the night with a trunk full of money.

Alfred Henry Lewis incorporates, in his "Wolfville" novel of the West, stories about a woman he calls Faro Nell. Some of the stories are identical to first-hand reports other writers have written about Lottie Deno. Mr. Hunter wrote that Mr. Lewis visited the Thurmonds in Deming in 1900 and learned stories from them that he used in his novels.

John C. Jacobs came west from Kentucky to hunt buffalo and later became sheriff of Fort Griffin. He told Mr. Hunter that he knew Lottie

Deno well and thought she was a wonderful woman. He said she once came to him saying she needed a friend in whom she could confide. She even told him her real name but pledged him to never reveal it, and he never did. She said that her husband had killed a man over a card game and had to leave for Mexico, taking nearly all their cash. At last she had received a letter telling her to meet him in San Angelo and they'd go west and make a new start. She told Mr. Jacobs that she was afraid to go, but soon after, in May 1878, she left on the Fort Concho stage, taking only her little leather trunk (which I remember), and telling him that she would not communicate with him again or with anyone else she'd known.

Aunt Lottie wasn't really my aunt. She was my godmother, and I still have her beautiful old ivory-covered prayer book which she gave me when I was confirmed. It has a black leather case, lined with white moiré, and fastened with an etched silver clasp. I was taught to call her "aunt" as I did several of my mother's closest friends. When the Thurmonds moved to Deming they were middle-aged and well-to-do. Deming was a tiny frontier town and if a man didn't care to talk about his past, and if he behaved with force and dignity, the wise course would undoubtedly have been to mind one's own business and not pry into his.

The Thurmonds had a nice home, nicer than most, with books, fine china, lovely linens, and good substantial furniture. Mrs. Thurmond started a little embroidery club which grew into the equivalent of a women's club. She taught embroidery and crocheting and did beautiful work herself. She had learned fancywork from the nuns at the convent school where she had been sent as a girl, she said. She held the reins and decided who could or couldn't belong to the club. She also was the guiding light in the Episcopal Ladies' Guild. She played all kinds of card games very well and as bridge became the popular game to play among the women, she played frequently. With us children she would play other card games. She nearly always had lunch with us. My father would stop by for her on his way home at noon, and then she'd spend the afternoon at our house, working at handwork if there wasn't a party. She told Mother that she had been wealthy and influential, but that her family had disowned her because they disapproved of her marriage to Mr. Thurmond. She was a peppy little person with a love of people and parties and celebrations. She told funny stories about her childhood; about how she'd traded the darkies out of their share of "cherry bounce" though she was forbidden to have it as it was alcoholic; about how her father would take her with him on trips, and at least once had taken her to Europe to buy horses. On the ship she loved watching the stylish ladies in their beautiful clothes, and was enchanted with their jewelled snuff boxes. She had begged her father for one, and although he indulged her most ways, he wouldn't allow her to have one. Her father liked to gamble and taught her

to play cards. He owned race horses and she would slip off and play poker with the jockeys. This was, of course, forbidden, but she didn't often get caught.

As I remember, Aunt Lottie didn't seem to have a taste for housekeeping. I didn't know her when Mr. Thurmond was alive, but as a widow she never cooked or stayed at home if there was any other way. For years she had breakfast with a neighbor family, just as she so frequently had lunch with us. She lived about three blocks from our house, and when she left in the afternoon our fox terrier would walk home with her, see her into her house, then turn around and return home. He did this with my grandmother, too. No one else.

Aunt Lottie would help with party plans or family celebrations. On Christmas Eve she stayed all night at our house and helped put the toys under the tree when we children had gone to bed. I remember not being really asleep one Christmas and hearing her get a doll out of Mother's closet, picking it up so the doll said "ma ma" and she and Mother shushed and giggled.

Her personal habits and grooming were dainty. Her hair was beautiful. She liked to wash it at our house and had to have a linen towel to dry it because anything else would leave lint. I remember that she smelled nice, of talcum powder, I think.

On the other hand, there was definitely an unconventional side to her character. She said that when it snowed she'd go out in her back yard, shed her clothes, and bathe in snow. One day she wanted to move from the front seat to the back seat of the car so she climbed over. I was surprised because she was definitely elderly. She was nearly 90 when she died in 1934. As she got older she'd cheat on her score card at bridge parties. The women knew she did this, so they often would have an extra little prize for her. They loved her and indulged her eccentricity.

More and more little pieces fit Charlotte Thurmond to Lottie Deno. Even Mother, who is now 94, is resigned to believing that her good friend Charlotte Thurmond was Lottie Deno. Couldn't Aunt Lottie have told us some great stories about the early frontier if she hadn't decided to forget her past and lead a more conventional life! She must have known all the notorious gamblers we read about: Smokey Joe, Laripy Dan, Hurricane Bill, Doc Holliday, Wyatt Earp, John Sellman, Pat Garrett. But even in the free-wheeling, mind-your-own-business, live-and-let-live attitude of the early West, there were taboos. For example, when Mother was a girl she knew a girl who "had to get married" and none of the other girls were permitted to ever associate with her anymore. She and her husband finally had to move away. So probably when she kept her secret, Aunt Lottie knew exactly what she was doing, and she did it with great success. Her last years may have been dull, but they were respectable. Oh my, yes.

## ACTIVITIES OF THE SOCIETY

The El Paso County Historical Society sponsored a four-day seminar, "New Approaches to Community History," April 27-30. The program, which was also held simultaneously in Dallas and Austin, was made possible by a grant from the Texas Committee for the Humanities, a state program of the National Endowment for the Humanities, with assistance from the Texas Historical Commission. The program was held at the Chamber of Commerce Building.

Participation was limited to non-academic historians who have an interest in urban or rural community history. Louise Año Nuevo Kerr, professor at Loyola University in Chicago, stressed the importance of oral history. Other topics pertained to research and resources for community history projects, historic preservation, writing projects, and the role of the museum in community history.

At the request of Dr. W.H. Timmons, the Society's board agreed to sponsor one of five plaques to be posted in El Paso County designating the route of the historic Camino Real. The project resulted from the observation made by New Mexico historian Marc Simmons, speaker at a Society meeting last year, that the route between Mexico City and Santa Fe lacks suitable historic markers. The monument on which a plaque will be placed was designed by Pat Rand, Society past president. The Junior League of El Paso also will sponsor markers. They will be located at San Elizario, Socorro, Ysleta, El Paso and Canutillo.

National Historic Preservation Week was observed May 9-15. The National Trust for Historic Preservations urged Americans to "Reinvest in America's Past." Herb Morrow, preservationist for El Paso County, advised the Society's board that the proposed Federal budget had zero funding for preservation, which would make it difficult for the average citizen to benefit under provisions of the Economic Recovery Act of 1981, since staffs for processing preservation projects could not be funded if that budget were adopted. The Texas Historical Commission, P.O. Box 12276, Austin, TX 78711, has publications about the Economic Recovery Act and how preservation projects may qualify for tax benefits.

A plan for restoring historic buildings of Downtown El Paso is being developed under the direction of Mayor Jonathan Rogers and City Council in coordination with El Paso Renaissance 400, a private non-profit corporation. Public and private action are being sought to preserve historic sites.

Dr. Martin Rice, new preservationist for El Paso, is preparing a booklet to explain how people can become involved in preservation activities.

William I. Latham, curator for the Society, planned a May 22

workshop on church history leading into the May 23 quarterly meeting on the same subject. Several El Paso churches are observing their 100th anniversaries during the 1980s. Mr. Latham also heads an acquisitions committee whose members include Jack Redman and Pat Rand.

The Society's board has been pursuing a new contract for sponsorship of the El Paso Museum of History, since the existing contract with the City of El Paso was to expire on May 12. The matter was to be brought up at the May quarterly meeting.

The board has approved the creation of a planning committee to establish goals for the Society for periods up to five years. Members are to be officers of the Society and the immediate past president.

President James M. Day appointed Vincent Lockhart to the board succeeding Mrs. L.A. Velarde.

Dates to remember: October 3 will be the Tour of Homes in several historic Sunset Heights homes. October 24 is designated for the annual Hall of Honors banquet.

*Fort Bliss* by Leon Metz, past president of the Society, was chosen for a design award by the Texas Institute of Letters at its 1982 meeting. Frank Mangan, a member of the Society board, designed and published the book, which was reviewed in the Spring issue of *Password*.

Regular columns of *Password* which are absent from this issue will be resumed in the Summer issue. The deadline was adjusted for this issue in order to resume a more regular printing schedule.

## BOOK REVIEWS

**BORDER TRIALS: RICARDO FLORES MAGON AND THE MEXICAN LIBERALS** by Thomas C. Langham. El Paso: Texas Western Press (Southwestern Studies No. 65), \$3.

The immensely profitable collaboration between foreign entrepreneurs and native oligarchs spawned increasing unrest in Mexico during the latter nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In addition to the critical issues of salary, work periods, and labor conditions, Mexican workers protested against dual pay standards, by which management paid them less than foreigners for the same amount of work. Workers began to strike. Moreover, disaffection grew among the peasantry, who bitterly resented the despoilment of their land by speculators, both native and foreign.

Chief among the oppositionist groups which gave voice to much of this discontent was the *Partido Liberal Mexicano* (PLM), or Mexican Liberal Party. The PLM was founded at the turn of the century in support of the traditional principles of mid-nineteenth century Mexican liberalism. Recognizing the unresponsiveness of that anachronistic political philosophy to modern socioeconomic imperatives, intellectual party leaders such as Ricardo Flores Magón, cognizant of contemporary anarchistic and socialistic thought in Europe, began to radicalize the PLM. They also challenged the legitimacy of the regime of President Porfirio Díaz (1876-1911).

At first, the government suppressed the challenge through myriad newspaper shut-downs, censorings, jailings, detentions, threats, kidnappings, lock-outs, beatings, executions and murders. Many dissidents rotted to death in prisons and labor camps, but others escaped.

Among the latter were those who chose exile in the American Southwest and California. These *revoltosos* - the name given them in official Mexican government intelligence reports - proved even more inimical to *diazpotismo* on foreign soil than they had in their native land; they published seditious newspapers, gave inflammatory anti-Díaz speeches, led demonstrations, and occasionally smuggled arms into Mexico. In response, the Mexican government launched a concerted campaign of surveillance and harassment against them within the borders of the United States. In addition to its many consuls in the Southwest and elsewhere, the Díaz regime also hired American detectives to work on its behalf.

The assistance of American officialdom at all levels was also of great importance to the Mexican government. During the first two decades of this century, American socialists and other radicals began to make their appearance along the border, particularly in areas dominated by extractive industries such as copper mining and smelting. Captains of industry,

good burghers, conservative newspapers, and local, state and federal authorities answered their demands for reform with a campaign of suppression characterized by anti-socialism and nativism. Because radical thought posed a common threat to capitalists on both sides of the border, the governments of the United States and Mexico closed ranks against socialists, regardless of their origins.

The most famous of these seditious exiles was Flores Magón himself. After arriving in Laredo, Texas from Mexico in early January 1904, he eventually made his way to St. Louis, Chicago, Canada, El Paso and Los Angeles. The present study focuses above all on his activities and lifestyle in the latter city; and it is also a recounting of the general trend of officially-sanctioned harassment Flores Magón and his correligionaries suffered at the hands of police, judges and juries. Repeatedly imprisoned, Flores Magón finally died in Leavenworth Federal Penitentiary in 1922, a victim of American "justice".

*Border Trials* is an outgrowth of a master's thesis. It is based principally upon Los Angeles area English-language newspapers, as well as the *magonista* organ, "Regeneración"; upon doctoral theses; and upon well-known published studies of the PLM. While it would be unfair to imply that the brief study under review was meant to be an ambitious overview of *magonismo* in the United States, it is nonetheless necessary to state that it has been rendered largely out-of-date by the recent publication of W. Dirk Raat's *Revoltosos: Mexico's Rebels in the United States, 1903-1923* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1981).

El Paso

Richard Estrada

THE RED RIVER IN SOUTHWESTERN HISTORY by Carl Newton Tyson. Norman: The University of Oklahoma Press, 1981, \$14.95.

Mighty rivers are magnificent features on the landscape. The sight of the Mississippi, the Nile, or the Rhine, can be awe-inspiring, not only for the sheer grandeur of the spectacle but for the knowledge of human purposes served over centuries of time by such an elemental force. Little wonder then that with the advances in human skills and understanding ushered in by the Neolithic age, rivers and their arable valleys provided the matrix within which otherwise primitive societies have flourished.

The Red River in America's Southwest is in no sense the equal of the aforementioned, but, like many other streams in the world that can properly be designated rivers, it has witnessed a generous portion of human conflict that ensues from need, greed, or the territorial imperatives

asserted by expansion-minded peoples and nations. Such is the burden of Carl Tyson's narrative as he traces the Red's history from the first contact between Indian tribes and Europeans in 1542 to the efforts of the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers to tame the river 400 years later.

Arising on the Staked Plains of the Texas Panhandle, the river follows a generally southeastward course spanning altogether 1,200 miles, forming the present boundary between the states of Oklahoma and Texas, dipping south through Arkansas and Louisiana, turning east again to enter the Mississippi just below Natchez. The Red and its tributaries drain an enormous and punishing land, claimed at one time or another by France, Spain, Mexico, and the United States, in which explorers, gold seekers, traders, missionaries, soldiers, diplomats, and others less easily classified, have sought—with marginal success up to at least the past century—to navigate its waters, exploit the wealth of its soil and game, but above all to control its space.

There is in abundance, then, the raw material for a truly epic history, but Tyson never manages to bring it off. Instead of saga one encounters a Sears catalog: a pedestrian recounting of the successive efforts of peoples and nations to claim the land and divert the river's many uses to their exclusive purposes. Parts of the story are given in meticulous detail, e.g., General Nathaniel Banks' failed expedition up the river during the Civil War, the result of which is unevenness of treatment and overall imbalance. But what is most lacking is the illuminating thread that binds it all together, and the author's assertion that the river itself provides the thread, without effectively demonstrating how, will not suffice.

El Paso

*Kenneth B. Shover*

**REVOLTOSOS: MEXICO'S REBELS IN THE UNITED STATES, 1903-1923** by W. Dirk Raat. College Station: Texas A&M University Press, \$22.50.

**ALVARO OBREGON: POWER AND REVOLUTION IN MEXICO, 1911-1920** by Linda B. Hall. College Station: Texas A&M University Press, \$22.50

*Revoltosos* describes the Mexican exiles in America. Thousands flocked to El Paso where they printed broadsides damning Porfirio Díaz and the United States. The exiles plotted rebellion and counter-revolution, they fought among themselves and were exploited by all sides. The Mexican

federal government had spies watching the exiles, and Washington had agents watching everybody. It was a time of flaming rhetoric and bitter hatreds, of diplomatic policies that didn't make sense, and of an emotional, convulsive people who were wanted nowhere and who belonged nowhere. *Revoltosos* discusses a violent and perplexing age that influenced this community to an enormous degree.

Obregón was a Mexican general, a former governor of Sonora, and perhaps the greatest figure to emerge from the Mexican revolution. He repeatedly defeated Pancho Villa in battle, yet rarely managed to emerge historically from Villa's shadow. The old soldier not only became the president of his country; he gave Mexico its first stable government following the revolution.

One cannot be interested in northern Mexico and the El Paso Southwest without acquiring these two histories.

El Paso

Leon C. Metz

**SLIM BUTTES, 1876: AN EPISODE OF THE GREAT SIOUX WAR**  
by Jerome A. Greene. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, \$12.95.

After the defeat of Lieutenant Colonel George A. Custer's cavalry forces at the Little Big Horn River in Montana Territory on June 25, 1876, the U.S. Army undertook an arduous campaign to bring under control the dissident groups of Sioux and Cheyenne Indians. General George Crook led the campaign which he described as one with "but few parallels in the history of our Army." Through the heat and heavy rains of a long summer, Crook's cavalry and infantry troops struggled to pursue the Indians who had been involved at Little Big Horn. The soldiers ran out of food and ate their own starved horses in order to continue the march. In mid-September Crook assigned Captain Anson Mills to lead a unit to locate an expected supply train and guide it to his location.

En route to the supply point, Mills unexpectedly came upon a Sioux encampment in a range of hills known as Slim Buttes in Harding County, South Dakota. A guide with his party sneaked into the camp and removed a pony. Mills, fearing discovery by the Sioux, decided to raid the camp at dawn. The *Chicago Times* called the action a "Siouxprise." Mills sent for Crook's forces in support, but had won the victory by the time they arrived.

Slim Buttes was the first solid victory over the Sioux in a war which ended the following spring after other commanders successfully adopted

Mills' tactic of dawn attack and Crook's technique of mule pack trains instead of supply wagons. In May of 1877 nearly 4,500 Sioux and Cheyennes laid down their arms to mark the end of this conflict.

Of particular interest to El Pasoans is the role of Anson Mills in the battle that was a turning point of the Sioux conflict; in 1859 he had surveyed the town plat for El Paso and in later years built the downtown building that still bears his name. His autobiography, *My Story*, a popular resource for local historians, also provided some of the major data for this book.

The author, James A. Greene, is research historian for the National Park Service in Denver and formerly was a historian for the Custer Battlefield National Monument.

El Paso

Nancy Hamilton

## BOOKS MISCELLANY

Last February 2 the Meteorological Rocket Network, a cooperative scientific organization dating from October, 1959, held a conference at the University of Texas at El Paso to celebrate the placing of the MRN Archives in the University's El Paso Centennial Museum. Speakers described the work of the network in pioneering research in meteorological data, an endeavor that had its origins at UT El Paso and White Sands Missile Range. Dr. Willis L. Webb, who organized the meeting, prepared for the occasion the *Meteorological Rocket Network History*. He has held dual roles in this research work since its inception, having been both a meteorologist at White Sands and a physics professor at the University, associated with the Schellenger Research Laboratory. His history is available at \$10 (including tax and postage) from MRN Publications, Box 4764, El Paso, TX 79914, or at the University Bookstore or the Centennial Museum shop.

The Southern Historical Press, which specializes in books of value in genealogical research, has published *Births, Deaths, and Marriages from El Paso Newspapers Through 1885*.

The material was compiled by the El Paso Genealogical Society under the chairmanship of Mrs. Jane Beard, as a Four Centuries '81 project. It includes names and dates of births, marriages and deaths recorded in newspapers of the El Paso area through 1885. Thirteen sources are listed, but their locations are not. Since most of them originated in or about 1881, their beginning dates of publication also would have been helpful to history researchers. The 226-page book is indexed. All names related to

births, marriages and deaths are listed, even though the persons mentioned lived in cities other than El Paso. According to the foreword, this is the first in a series planned by the Genealogical Society, with future books to include information up to 1890, then to 1895 and finally to 1900. Inquiries about publications may be directed to the Southern Historical Press, Inc., P.O. Box 738, Easley, South Carolina 29640.

Since El Pasoans customarily do considerable traveling in New Mexico, a new book of maps is of special interest. Jerry L. Williams, assistant professor of geography at the University of New Mexico, and Paul E. McAllister, historian for the Air Defense, Tactical Air Command, are editors of *New Mexico in Maps* published in paperback by the University of New Mexico Press at \$12.95. Several co-authors contributed articles related to their own fields of expertise, such as population studies, history and pre-history, and the geological, meteorological and biological phenomena of the state. This is a treasure of information about everything one might want to know about New Mexico's past and present.

Gulf Publishing Company, Book Division (P.O. Box 2608, Houston, TX 77001) has released another interesting paperback, *A Guide to Historic Texas Inns and Hotels*, at \$9.95. Ann Ruff describes 45 famous and not-so-famous inns. El Paso is represented by Hotel Paso del Norte. Area maps tell exactly how to find the historic buildings.

The Friends of the Corpus Christi Museum advise *Password* of a new publication in their series of occasional papers. It is *The Boll Weevil Comes to Texas* by Frank Wagner, relating the history and effects of the insect's invasion of cotton lands. Prepaid orders may be sent (with check or money order for \$5) to Friends of the Corpus Christi Museum, 1919 North Water Street, Corpus Christi, TX 78401. Earlier papers in the series are *Nueces County, Texas 1750-1800: A Bicentennial Memoir* by D.E. Kilgore (\$3), *Museums and the Student* by Aalbert Heine (\$3), *Museums and the Teacher* by Aalbert Heine (\$3), *Papermaking at Home* by Aalbert Heine (\$3), and *The Corpus Christi Museum Almanac 1980* by Frank Wagner (\$3).

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