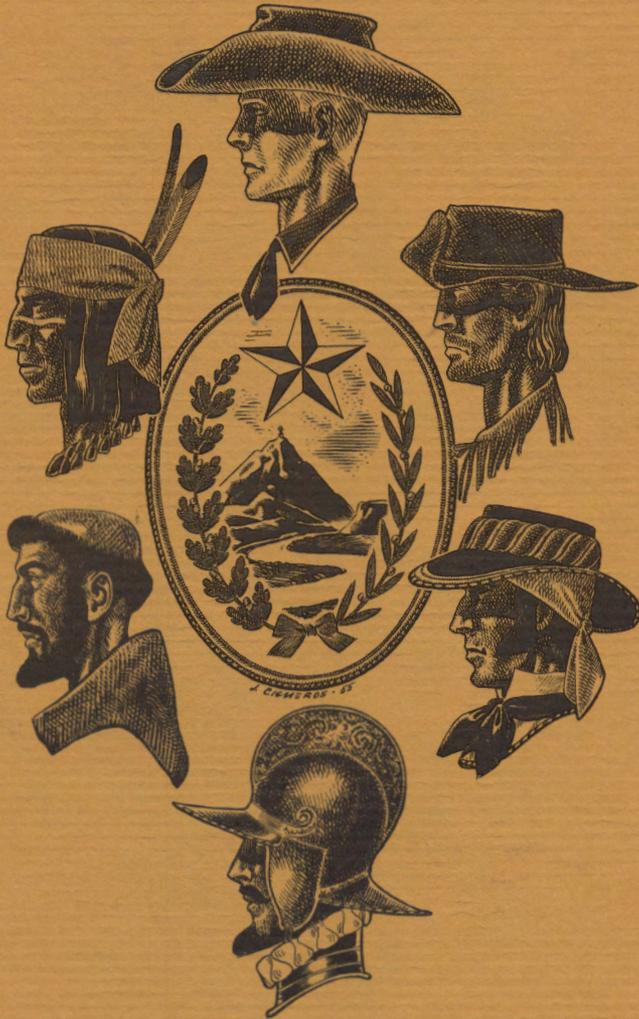


PASSWORD



THE EL PASO COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Vol. XXX, No. 2

EL PASO, TEXAS

SUMMER, 1985



PASSWORD

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IN MEMORIAM

Colonel (ret.) P. A. Loiselle



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THE FRONTERA SETTLEMENT

By Jeannie Marie Hamilton

FRONTERA ROAD near Sunland Park racetrack and a hidden United States Boundary Commission location marker are the last reminders of a Rio Grande crossing point that was important enough to be shown on maps of the 1850s.

As is well known, several major influences were felt in the river valley near the present location of El Paso during the late 1840s and the 1850s. First, the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, signed on February 2, 1848, described the new international boundary between the United States and Mexico as "the Rio Grande...following the deepest channel...to the point where it strikes the southern boundary of New Mexico (which is north of the town called El Paso) to its western termination," north to the Gila River, then following the Gila until it empties into the Colorado River, westward to the Pacific.¹ Thus was ceded to the United States an area that had made up half of Mexico's national domain. Second, the discovery of gold in California in 1848 aroused interest in travel to the far West and prompted the development of new routes leading through El Paso. In August of 1849, it was reported that 4,000 emigrants with 1,200 to 1,500 wagons were camped in the valley near El Paso. And third, the United

Miss Hamilton, a metallurgical engineering student at The University of Texas at El Paso, prepared this paper for an English class. She often rides horseback in the vicinity of the Frontera trading post site.

This issue's title-page insignia, which depicts "Mandy" and an early-day El Paso streetcar, is by contributing artist Marie Brady of El Paso.

States began establishing a series of military posts along the new border to secure the land taken from Mexico and to protect the residents from marauding Indians.

The El Paso valley was already dotted with several communities that had been settled under the influence of the Spaniards — among them, Paso del Norte (now Ciudad Juárez), which had grown around the mission established in 1659 and which was an important stop on the trade route from Santa Fe to Mexico City; Ysleta and Socorro, which had developed respectively around missions founded as a result of the Pueblo Revolt in northern New Mexico in 1680; and San Elizario, a town that had been animated by the presence of a fortress.

In the late 1840s several Americans came to the valley and established ranches and businesses related to the trade route. James Wiley Magoffin, who earlier had lived in northern Mexico, started what became known as Magoffinsville near present downtown El Paso. Hugh Stephenson had a ranch called Concordia, a name still used by the cemetery that occupies part of his original ranch site. Near the river Simeon Hart established his home and flour mill, called Hart's Mill.

In 1848 T. Frank White and some officers of the Army Engineers came to the pass to establish a fort and customs house for the port of entry between Mexico and the United States. The custom house site was eight miles up river from Paso del Norte. White built a store and a house there and cultivated the surrounding fields.² The place was called Frontera, which in Spanish means "frontier" or "border." Both of these terms are significant, since this was a point on the river where travelers going west could cross safely into the new frontier, and it was also near the new boundary line between Mexico and the United States. Frontera became the first new settlement in American territory north and east of the Rio Grande.³ And it was also the site of the first trading post on that same side of the El Paso valley, since this kind of business traditionally had been transacted in Paso del Norte.

In the *Santa Fe Republican* of August 8, 1848, White ran an announcement:

The Subscriber having established a House at the Town of Frontera, opposite El Paso, on the American side of the Rio del Norte, for the transaction of a General Commission and forwarding business, offers his service to his friends and the Public. He has on Hand a well assorted Stock of Merchandise, consisting of Lienzon, Manta, Prints, Hardware, Queensware, Groceries. . . . Traders Passing to and from Chihuahua, will find at his establishment, Corn, Provisions, and all other articles usually required by a train of wagons.⁴

At the time White came to the valley, there were three places commonly used for crossing the Rio Grande. One was near San Elizario, where the river ran between two steep banks and was often so swift that it was dangerous to cross. Another was at Paso del Norte, which presented the same problems as at San Elizario. Frontera, though, overlooked a wide, swampy area where the river spread out before entering the narrow rocky channel. The river did not run so swiftly and it was shallower than at the other two crossing points.

When Frederick A. Wislizenus, a scientist, had visited the area in 1846, he described this "upper crossing" to which the roads led:

One road crosses here the river, and leads over the hills, covered with deep sand, to the plain on which the town (Paso del Norte) lies. The other continues on the left side of the river, ascends over a rocky, broken country to a considerable elevation, and descends from here to the valley of El Paso, crossing the river below, at the town. We selected the first road and crossed the river, therefore, at once. The water was very low and we passed it without any difficulty.⁵

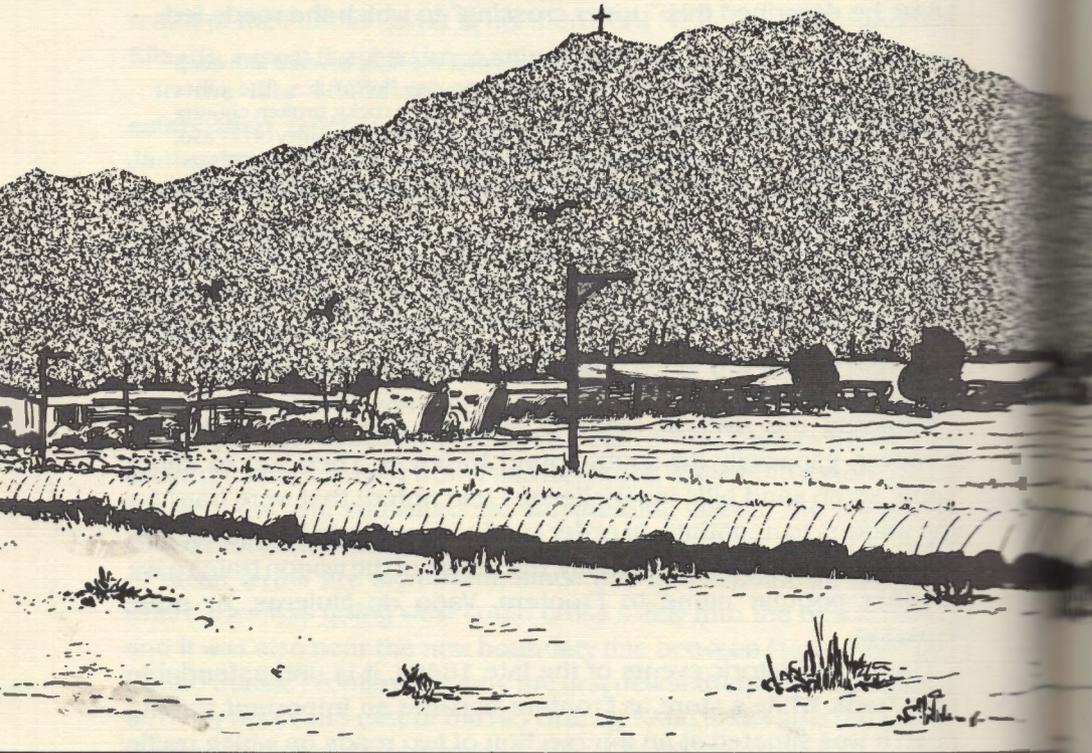
Later, in 1858, Anson Mills surveyed this part of the river and wrote that "it had solid rock bed and walls, the latter about 400 feet apart, and that the valley above which comes close down to the spur of the Rocky Mountains, which crossed the river and formed the pass, was from four to eight miles wide."⁶

Crossing the river at Frontera was not without its problems, however, especially for south-bound travelers. They had to climb some steep sand hills (as Wislizenus had noted) that were hard for the wagons to negotiate, in order to go around Mule Mountain, now known as Cristo Rey. Incidentally, the mules of the wagon trains gave another popular name to Frontera, Vado de Muleros, or mule crossing.

Given the historic events of the late 1840s, it is understandable that Frank White's store at Frontera became an important trading post. It was situated at an intersection of two roads on which traffic was steadily increasing: when New Mexico became a part of the United States, the north-south trade route was opened up; and, a little later, hordes of goldseekers were pushing westward through the El Paso area.⁷

Soon after he came to the valley, White wrote a letter on November 2, 1848, to Sebastian Bermúdez, Prefecto of Paso del Norte, saying he had received instructions from the governor of the Territory of New Mexico "to extend my jurisdiction as a magistrate of this territory over the towns situated on the east side of the Rio del Norte below the

town of El Paso." He concluded by saying that he hoped "the friendly relations now existing" would continue.⁸ His appointment had been made by Colonel John M. Washington, military governor of New Mexico.⁹ Although the boundaries between the two nations had not been defined yet and El Paso would not be organized by Texas until 1850, White became politically powerful under the authority granted him by the military governor. He issued grants of land and collected taxes from those who recognized him as a New Mexico official.¹⁰



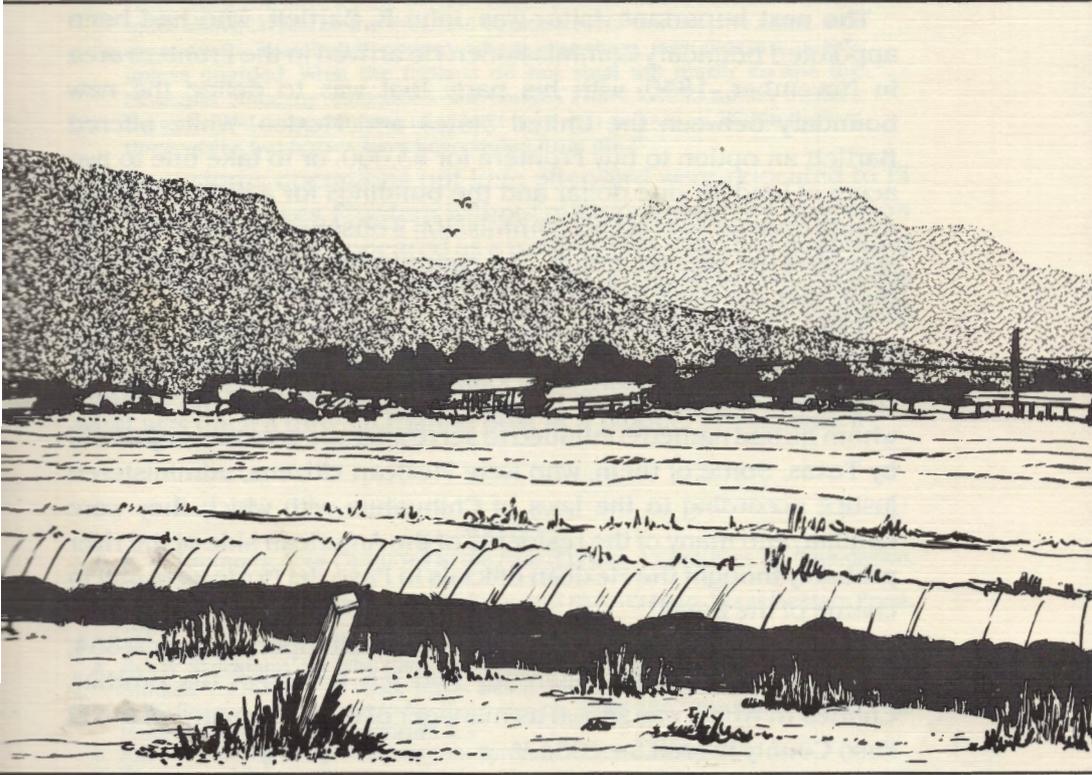
In early 1849 White began removing local officials who had been put into office under the Mexican government, and made his own appointments. He warned Mexicans who lived south of the river not to trespass on American territory to cut timber or gather salt.¹¹ Furthermore, at this first customs house at the new border crossing point, White levied toll on all merchandise and livestock coming out of Mexico.¹²

Initially, Frontera's location appeared to make it the likely spot to develop into the main trade center in the area. During his recon-

The Frontera Settlement

naissance of the El Paso area in 1849, Lieutenant H. C. Whiting wrote in his journal on April 17 that Frontera was the possible site for a military post to be established on the Rio Grande. He thought the ford there was better than the one opposite Paso del Norte, and Frontera was at the intersection of two great highways. He recommended it as the location for a permanent military encampment.¹³

Major Jefferson Van Horne brought Army troops to the Pass in 1849. But instead of being stationed at Frontera, they rented



A present-day view of the spot where the Frontera settlement was located in the mid-nineteenth century. The stake in the foreground indicates the position of the buried Frontera marker. Mount Cristo Rey rises in the background. (Sketch by Vicki Trego Hill from a photograph by Jeannie Marie Hamilton.)

buildings from Franklin Coons, whose property occupied what is now the heart of downtown El Paso. When White asked Van Horne as military commander of the area to give him help in collecting taxes, the major sought directions from Colonel John Monroe, ex officio governor of New Mexico. Colonel Monroe replied on December 29, 1849, that the military should support the civil authority of the

Territory of New Mexico and help the officials until the boundary between New Mexico and Texas was settled. At that time, Texas was claiming ownership of New Mexico and other land to the north.¹⁴

In 1850 when Robert S. Neighbors was ready to return to East Texas after organizing El Paso County, he sought White's help. He wrote in his expedition report that "F. W. Esq., acting as agent of the United States government, furnished me considerable aid in procuring animals for my return."¹⁵

The next important visitor was John R. Bartlett, who had been appointed Boundary Commissioner. He arrived in the Frontera area in November, 1850, with his party that was to define the new boundary between the United States and Mexico. White offered Bartlett an option to buy Frontera for \$3,000, or to take title to two acres of land for one dollar and the buildings for a rental of \$65 a month in order to erect his commission's observatory there. Bartlett accepted the second option. The commission built an observatory there that was used during 1851 to collect data.¹⁶

White apparently remained in control of the El Paso area until the county was fully organized and until elected or appointed officials could be chosen to apply the laws of Texas. Many of the alcaldes whom he had named continued to serve after the area was organized by Texas. Some of them, who were Mexican citizens, administered justice according to the laws of Chihuahua with which they were familiar, and many of the residents of the American side of the river probably thought the Mexican officials in Paso del Norte were still in charge of the area.¹⁷

The custom house at Frontera was still operating in 1854, although Frank White apparently had left the area. His brother, Charles W. White, was shown as manager of their company on the El Paso County tax roll for 1854.¹⁸

Little is known of Frank White's background or of where he went after leaving Frontera. Rex W. Strickland, whose *Six Who Came to El Paso* contains the major research about White, speculates that it was Frank White, rather than James White, who was mentioned as a trader in Susan Magoffin's *Down the Santa Fe Trail and into Mexico*. The editor of that book, Stella Drum, wrote in her footnotes that the trader named White, mentioned by Mrs. Magoffin, was James White who had been hired to help Samuel Magoffin, Susan's husband, with his wagon train from Santa Fe to Chihuahua in 1846. Dr. Strickland thinks it is more likely that this Mr. White was Frank White, who then

returned to El Paso in 1848. White evidently did marry and have children, because his namesake and great-grandson, Frank White, came to El Paso in the 1950s as a reporter for the *El Paso Herald-Post*.¹⁹

The Frontera property in 1855 was taken over by Henry L. Dexter, who served briefly as a customs agent. In a letter to his sister on June 7, 1855, he wrote:

Some two months since I purchased the rancho I now occupy which is called Frontera. If you have a map of New Mexico you will see "Frontera" some 8 miles above El Paso on the river, and 40 below Fort Fillmore. I live alone, with my servants, in an Indian country, where everything, even pigs, are unsafe unless guarded. What the Indians do not steal will hardly escape the Mexicans. Since my residence in the country I have lost 13 horses besides the cows and oxen, only one of which I have ever recovered. Within the last three weeks two horses have been stolen from me.²⁰

The customs operations not long afterward were relocated to El Paso and Las Cruces. Frontera, without military support for protection from the Indians, disappeared as a trading post. The river continued to move around the valley, leaving patches of New Mexico land on the east side of the present river valley within a few yards of the Frontera site. The road named Frontera and a Boundary Commission marker, buried near that road with a warning not to disturb it, are all that mark what was once a thriving trading post at a pioneer crossroads.★

NOTES

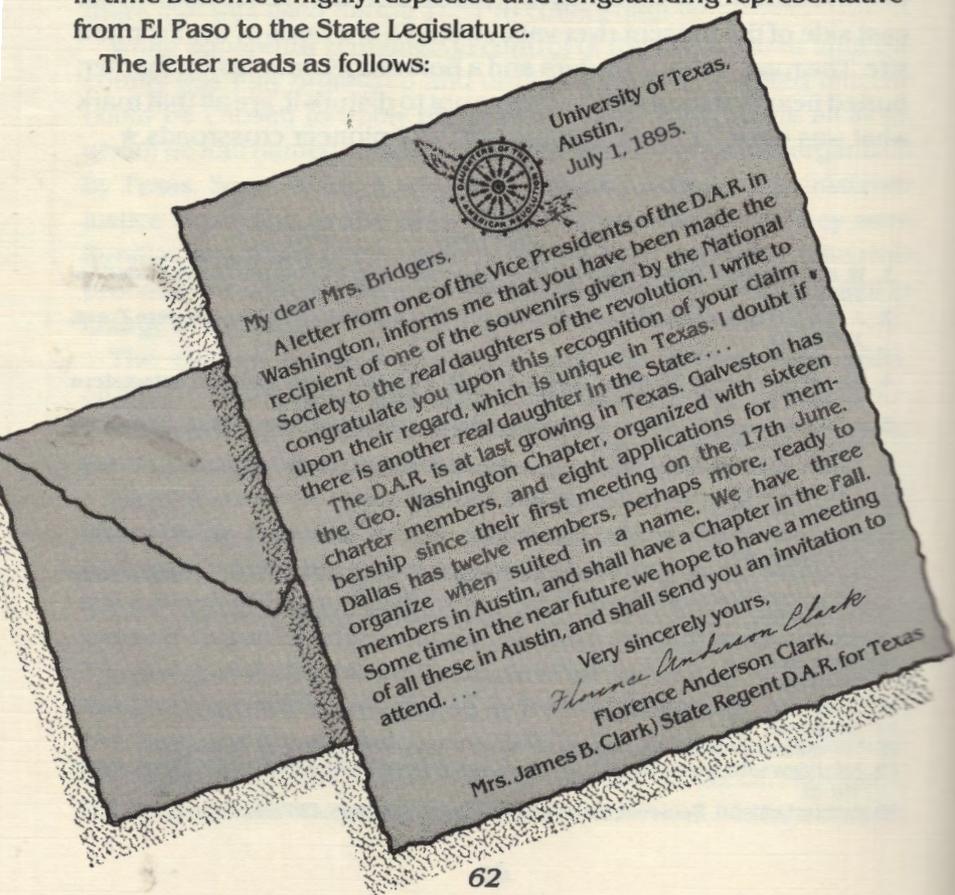
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2. J. Morgan Broaddus, *The Legal Heritage of El Paso* (El Paso: Texas Western Press, 1963), 32.
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5. A. Wislizenus, M.D., *A Tour to Northern Mexico, 1846-1847* (Rio Grande Press, New Mexico, reprint of 1848 edition), 3.
6. Anson Mills, *My Story* (Washington: Byron S. Adams, 1928), 262.
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10. Broaddus, 42.
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12. Owen White, *Out of the Desert* (El Paso: McMath Company, 1924), 55.
13. Strickland, 11.
14. Broaddus, 32.
15. Strickland, 12.
16. Timmons, "American El Paso," 6.
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19. Interview with Nancy Hamilton, who was a reporter with Frank White (September, 1983).
20. Arthur Leibson, *Personal Archives of Historical Papers*, El Paso.

A LETTER TO A REAL DAUGHTER

CAROLYN BRIDGERS TANNER, a native El Pasoan who now resides in Saratoga, California, shares with *Password* readers a letter received in El Paso by her grandmother, Melissa Caroline Tinsley Bridgers, in early July of 1895. Written on official "Daughters of the American Revolution" stationery by the D.A.R. State Regent for Texas, the letter alludes to Mrs. Bridgers' father, James Tinsley, who as a boy had fought in the American Revolution. It expresses its writer's pride and pleasure at discovering that one of the few remaining actual daughters of the Revolution was a citizen of Texas.

At the time of receiving the letter, Mrs. Bridgers, who had been born when her father was nearly 70 years old, was a widow in her vigorous sixties. She was living at 602 North Stanton Street in the house she had built for herself and her three young sons shortly after the family had settled in El Paso in 1881. Her oldest son, Will W. Bridgers, would in time become a highly respected and longstanding representative from El Paso to the State Legislature.

The letter reads as follows:





ENGLISH (ONLY!) SPOKEN HERE

By Ray Past

THE BOWIE HIGH SCHOOL student newspaper, *The Growler*, for September 21, 1948, carried on its front page, under a picture of Principal F. C. Pollitt, an article headlined "Speak English Rule Enforced." Here is the text:

Considered as one of the most important issues in Bowie according to Mr. F. C. Pollitt, principal, is that of speaking English. He thinks it is to the advantage of all Bowie students to speak English not only here at school, but in their homes to your own family if possible.

Mr. Pollitt reminds us that we have to be aware of the fact that the habits we are now acquiring in speaking English will determine our future.

"In many instances," Mr. Pollitt said, "the parents of Bowie students wish their child to be transferred to a school in the North part of town because they wish their child to speak fluent English."

"The rule of speaking English was made by the School Board, and since we want to make Bowie first in everything, support the School Board by speaking as much English as we possibly can," Mr. Pollitt said.

The appeal here is to the student's common sense, to his presumed personal ambitions, to his awareness of filial obligations, and to the school pride that has made "La Bowie" a byword in El Paso scholastic circles. All of this might be called the velvet glove.

Dr. Past, who joined the English Department faculty of Texas Western College in 1952, retired from The University of Texas at El Paso in 1984. Primarily responsible for the establishment of the Department of Linguistics in 1970, he served as its chairman until the summer of 1983. He is a charter member of TESOL, the international professional organization of Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, and is the charter president of the local affiliate of that organization.

Yes, there was a steel fist inside. It is hinted at in the headline's reference to a "Speak English Rule" and the implication, never mentioned in the article, that it was to be *enforced*. But the rule was more than some aberration of Frank Pollitt's. And it was more than a rule "made by the School Board." It had the formidable power of state law behind it.

During the Great War, thirty years before the *Growler* piece, in a fervor of patriotism and hatred of the Hun, the 35th Texas Legislature passed House Bill No. 128 (April 3, 1918) "REQUIRING TEACHERS IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS TO CONDUCT SCHOOL WORK IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE EXCLUSIVELY," thereby imposing hardship on a number of succeeding generations of Texas students whose mother tongue was not English. Though the principal target was German, the people most affected were Spanish speakers, simply because of their numbers. Section 1 of the law stated that

Every teacher, principal, and superintendent employed in the public free schools of this state shall use the English language exclusively in the conduct of the work of the schools, and all recitations and exercises of the school shall be conducted in the English language, and the trustees shall not prescribe any texts for elementary grades not printed in the English language....

The section went on to exempt "the teaching of Latin, Greek, French, German, Spanish, Bohemian, or other language as a branch of study in the high school grades as outlined in the state course of study."

Section II of the Bill stipulated penalties for violation: *viz*, "not less than Twenty-Five Dollars (\$25.00) and not more than One Hundred Dollars (\$100.00), cancellation of certificate, or removal from office." Further, each day's violation was to be regarded as a separate offence. In 1918 dollars these were significant amounts, well worthy of the dignity of capitalization.

A half century later we find another Legislature directing its attention to the same subject, but it was working in a different cultural climate. House Bill 103, an Act of the 61st Legislature, Regular Session, 1969, stipulated that though English shall be "the basic language of instruction in all grade schools," the governing body of the school district or school "may determine when, in which grades or classes, and circumstances, instruction may be given bilingually...." The State Board of Education issued a policy statement that

Bilingual Education, the total educational process using two languages, shall be the method of instruction wherever it is appropriate and at the discretion of the local board of trustees. Bilingual programs for secondary school students (grades 7-12) shall be submitted to the Texas Education Agency for approval prior to their initiation and renewed every three years....

janitor was Mexican-American, but all the teachers were anglos. Because I was older than the other kids and was bossing them around, I was transferred out in a couple of weeks to first grade.

Q. Was there ever any punishment of you kids for using Spanish in the classroom? Did it have to be English only?

A. It was supposed to be English but we couldn't speak English. Most of the time was spent disciplining us rather than teaching us.

Q. Well, I've heard these stories about detention, about spanking hands, or swatting, and I wonder did it apply to these very early grades too?

A. They would bawl us out but they would not spank us there. If we needed that, they would take us to the principal's office and the *janitor* would come in bringing a paddle with holes in it.

Q. Wow! And why did they use that? What did you do to get punished? Was it used for speaking Spanish, maybe?

A. No, not for speaking Spanish. For rowdiness. But when you get down to it, it came back to the language problem. Since the teacher spoke no Spanish she had a lot of trouble getting us to do what she wanted. If she wanted us to go to the board she would have to *show* us what she wanted, maybe grab a kid and lead him to the board. And in the meantime all the kids were getting out of control.

I remember the math — this was in the third grade. By this time we knew the ABC's and we could sort of pronounce some English words. But when they started with the arithmetic they were using words I could never comprehend. They gave me numbers and I sort of learned them, but they could never make me understand what they wanted me to do with them. But God was with me. The teacher that taught the arithmetic got sick, and the substitute who came in was a Miss López.

Q. Miss López? A bilingual teacher?

A. A bilingual teacher.

Q. And she could use Spanish with you? And did?

A. She could and she did.

Q. Mike, I keep hearing from people I've talked to that one way a teacher could get fired fast was to use Spanish in the classroom, but it apparently didn't happen that way in your school.

A. Well, there was only this one teacher, and she was a substitute. She told me something about arithmetic but I still didn't understand. So she explained it to me in Spanish, and Oh, man! it was just like *day*

and night. I *liked* that! English I couldn't read, and all the other courses seemed useless to me, really, but the math! It was something that enabled me finally to say "I'm going to school!"

Q. Maybe a silly question, Mike, but what did your teachers call you? Michael? Miguel? Mike?

A. Miguel, until the 5th grade. Then a teacher decided we were all ready to become Americans, and she gave us anglo versions of our names. I became Mike at that time. I still remember one guy who was named Amador. Of course the rest of us called him "Lover." There were several names with no good translation.

Q. When do you think you really began to get a grip on English?

A. When I left Franklin. That school only had five grades and the students who finished there were sent to Aoy. But the year I finished, Aoy was too crowded so they took six of us who lived in Chihuahuita and sent us to Vilas—and that was a *completely* different school! The teachers were still anglos, but for the first time I saw anglo students. It was about 30% anglo, about 70% Mexican.

Q. But even the 30% gave you an exposure to English you'd never had before?

A. Not only that, but the Mexican-Americans who went to that school all spoke good English. They were a different type from those back in the barrio.

Q. You got into, then, not only a different linguistic frame, but a different cultural and economic frame?

A. Completely! But we were still from the barrio, and still bigshot members of the barrio gangs which were dominating and controlling the barrio schools. Let me tell you how dumb the six of us were. We decided to run Vilas school, and we figured we had to whip the leader. So we picked on the guy with the symbols of power — and he turned out to be only a crossing guard, wearing the white belt and everything. After we beat this guy up the coach "beat us up." He was a Mexican, named Mendoza. Franklin school had not had a coach, nor any athletic program, but Vilas did..

Mr. Mendoza opened new worlds to Mike Izquierdo, for Mike went on to El Paso High School and the College of Mines, now The University of Texas at El Paso, and at both schools in addition to studies he starred in athletics, especially basketball.



Enrique Pérez, a second interviewee, today serves as Director of all secondary-level education in the El Paso school system. He entered kindergarten at Aoy school in 1950, with no English. He was, however, already literate in Spanish so that very quickly he was boosted to the second grade. His father, a product of Aoy and a graduate of Bowie High School, spoke English of course, but he was a doctor of medicine and was seldom at home. Mr. Pérez says, "When I started school my father began speaking English to us kids when he was home. I don't think there were two families in south El Paso where this was done." His mother did not speak English, but she did teach her children to read and write in Spanish before they went off to school.

Enrique recalls his first class as "English only." The students were 100% Spanish speaking. "The kids communicated in Spanish," he says, "unless they were in earshot of a teacher, and then you either didn't communicate—you waited until the teacher wasn't there—or you tried to communicate as best you could in English. And you progressively got better." The language of the playground was also English "when it was supervised." The standard punishment for violation of the no-Spanish rule was detention. Some teachers would give the boys (only) a choice of detention or a swat.

Referring to a problem that still confronts the El Paso schools, he says, "Third grade was the first time I had a classmate about twice my size. His family had just arrived from Mexico. They couldn't handle him in classes at his real level (on account of his lack of English) so they put him in a lower grade. When I was in about the 6th grade we would get *much* older students with us, and they really didn't like it." He remembers two of these "overage" kids particularly because "they made it." When asked, he estimated that perhaps 30% of the students he knew *didn't* make it."

Questioned about frustrations, he said his biggest was that he could read well in Spanish, regular adult fare, but in English he had to back up to Dick and Jane type stuff. By the 5th and 6th grades he says he was "wiping out" sections of the public library. He adds parenthetically that his mother was fascinated by the public libraries here, unlike in Mexico, but, alas, at that time there were no library materials in Spanish for her.

Mr. Pérez began his teaching career in 1964 at the junior high level, at Bowie.

Q. Was the "English only" rule in effect then? And how effective was it?

A. The rule was there, and it was as effective as it always had been, which is to say not very. There were tricks: Whoever spots the teacher first throws out a word in English, or some other kind of signal, or gets silent. And the conversation would either cease or switch to English — until the teacher passed, and then back to Spanish. It was a game.

Q. Did you yourself, as a teacher, ever violate the rules?

A. Yes, I did. I remember one time I was irritated at my students' pronunciation of "liberry" instead of *library*. I asked them what the word for book was in Spanish and after a startled silence one of them told me, *libro*. I put the word on the board, pronounced it several times, pointing out the "r" and the relation of the word to English *library*, and was just getting really into the swing of the thing, in Spanish, when I looked around and there was a supervisor standing in the doorway. I fully expected to hear about the incident later, but I didn't. I'll bet, though, that those kids always remembered about that first "r" in *library*.

I felt there were some things I could teach the kids, because I'd been through the same experience. I believed their knowledge of Spanish could be capitalized on to help teach them English.

Q. How would you estimate the success of the school's language policies at that time?

A. Terrible. There simply was no success. They were trying to encourage English by imposing penalties and they didn't think of the negative consequences.

Q. And what are the negative consequences?

A. For many of the kids, the fact that their language had no place in what was perhaps the most important part of their lives. Their homes, they themselves, had no place either. The biggest damage done, probably not measurable in any way, is the potential that was lost.



Another person interviewed was Benito Rodríguez, whose present assignment with the El Paso Public Schools bears the title "Consultant, Bilingual Compliance and Parental Involvement." He began his schooling in the first grade at old Morehead back in the late '30's. He was a Spanish-speaking monolingual, and remembers that his class was about 1/3 Spanish-speaking, 2/3 English-speaking children. He remembers vividly that on the first day of class the teacher told him to "take a chair over there," which he didn't

understand. A little girl whispered a "translation" to him, "Dice que abra la ventana," so he went and opened the window, convulsing the class. He did not like that little girl for a long time. He remembers no bilingual teachers at Morehead.

The "English only" rule was no problem. Since most of the students were English speakers, English was naturally the language of the class, and the others simply had to learn it. English was also the language normally used on the playground, he says. "I had no choice. I learned from my peers." And, he astutely adds, "That's always the best way."

Mr. Rodríguez began teaching at Bowie High School in 1958 at the junior high level. He says the school was about 99% Mexican-Americans. Most of them were first generation, children of recent immigrants.

Q. Was school policy English-only, and if so how was it enforced?

A. Very stupidly. Teachers had tickets to give violators, and anyone caught using Spanish on campus was given a ticket and referred to Spanish detention.

I was put in charge of the detention class.... I noticed that the same students were being caught every day by the same teachers. In a school with about 1400 students about 32 were always caught, and by about seven teachers out of around 110. How can you say this is controlling the speaking of Spanish?

Q. You don't think the "English only" rules were very effective?

A. They were totally ineffective. *Totally!* A worthless exercise.

Q. Did you ever violate the rules yourself?

A. All the time.

Q. Why?

A. Because I've always been very comfortable in my own language.

Q. Do you have any idea what dropout rates would have been in your own generation?

A. Good information about dropout rates is almost inaccessible. That is something school administrators do not want to talk about, even now. It's politically explosive stuff.

Q. I remember seeing some U.S. Government figures back around 1970 that ran as high as 75%.

A. It sounds likely to me. I think in my day the figure may well have been at or near 80%.



Another person willing to reminisce about her school days was Beatrice Robin, who works in health care, presently at Hillhaven. Ms. Robin entered school at Beall in about 1932. After elementary at Beall she attended Bowie High School for a time, and later El Paso High. She remembers Beall as "100% Spanish-speaking," though she herself knew some English when she entered: she describes a "round table" in the family kitchen at which her father sat the children and "taught us how to speak English and how to become Americans."

Q. So when you started school you already spoke some English?

A. Yes, but the other kids didn't. The janitor used to make for the principal a long, thin stick with leather straps on it, and kids got whipped with that. I saw it used, and sometimes just for speaking Spanish.

Q. You said something about having your named changed at school?

A. Yes. My name was Beatriz, which my teacher changed to Beatrice. The English names were easier for the teacher to pronounce. My brother Guillermo was changed to William, my sister María Elena to Helen, and so on.

Q. Did the kids object at all to this process?

A. Well, the teachers said that was what we were going to do, and so that's what we did.

Q. Did you have to use English outside on the playground, too?

A. Yes. Later, when I went to Bowie they told me we would get expelled for using Spanish. And then I came to El Paso High and they would expel you for Spanish.

Q. Were any of you children hurt, frustrated, angry, with the discipline that accompanied the English program?

A. Well, we cried, you know. And we were embarrassed at being spanked. And there were a lot of dropouts, kids who quit going to school because they just couldn't pick up the English. One man I know who dropped out says he was "too burro."



Two sisters were interviewed: Josefina Salas-Porras and María Elena Flood. Both attended Houston School and both later graduated from El Paso High. Ms. Flood is now serving as a member of the Texas

State Board of Education. Ms. Salas-Porras was owner of the Bilingual Institute, a successful private language school here in El Paso.

Ms. Flood first. She entered Houston School, first grade, in 1940. She estimates the composition of the student body there as "about 50-50 Mexican-American and anglo."

Q. How would you describe your own ability in English at that time?

A. We (she and her sister and brother) knew no English. It was a rule of our home that no English was to be spoken. My parents' view was that the schools and society would offer us the opportunity to command English, and that living here on this border — and because we related to both cities a great deal — we needed to maintain proper, appropriate, non-corrupted Spanish skills. By the time we got to about high school age we were allowed to use English with English-speaking friends who came to our house, but not to our parents after the friends had left.

I remember rushing home excited from grade school with something like "Mama, guess what happened at school today!" and my mother answering, "No entiendo inglés."

Q. But she did understand English?

A. Of course. Both my parents were bilingual. They were following a deliberate policy. It seemed harsh to us children, but later we were grateful.

Q. So how did you get along in the first grade, a Spanish-speaking girl in an English language class?

A. With great turmoil, knowing all the answers and not knowing how to say them.

Q. The class was of course English only?

A. English only, with reprimands and punishment for speaking Spanish in class, or on the playground.

Q. Did you experience any frustration with this approach?

A. Oh, many, many times! To know the answers and be able to express them only in Spanish! You *perceived* what the questions were, whether you understood them or not. For instance, if they had color charts up ... (for students to identify and name the colors). It was most frustrating. Especially if you were sitting with a Spanish-speaking classmate and you snickered and said "Eso es rojo," that's when you caught it.

It was a true immersion. I always interpreted it as a misguided but duly dedicated effort to make us functional in the language which

society and the economy was going to demand of us. I just never felt it was evil.

Q. You were never caused to feel that Spanish was somehow inferior, or that your own people and your own background were?

A. No, not *inferior*, but that it had no place here now. Sorry, this is the good old USA, and there is only one establishment. There was no semblance of high respect or admiration for (my heritage).

Q. Was your teacher herself bilingual?

A. I don't recall *one* of my teachers being bilingual, and if they were in Houston School at that time they would never let on to it.

Q. Do you remember any particular language experiences?

A. Well, you know a classmate of mine in high school was Rosa Guerrero, and when Rosa did the film "Tapestry" I wept and wept and wept because it brought back so many memories like the only thing you were really good at was rhythm because that had no language — you had two little sticks and a tambourine and a drum and a tinkle of bells.

Q. You say the English-only rule applied to the playground too?

A. Yes, it did. And that was where it was very, very difficult. Outside the confines of the classroom with the rigidity dropped, you reverted — and the playground supervisor would yank you off the monkey bars and sit you against the wall if you spoke Spanish.

Q. I wonder if you have any idea of what happened to your classmates — the Spanish-speaking ones. How many, what percentage would you say, dropped out of school?

A. At El Paso (High School) there were many dropouts, due to lack of ability to command the language, and feeling put-down, inept. Many of those young people were not lacking in intellect, but just not skilled enough (in language) to compete with the Kern Place kids.

Q. In spite of all the traumas the system dealt you, you learned English beautifully, as did your sister — and yet as you point out, many others either couldn't or wouldn't. Do you ever speculate on that?

A. I have to say that it was what our home established as principles and expectations. Our family did not accept anything less than our best, and we were taught to accept our responsibilities and do our assignments.

Q. By the way, the part of town you grew up in (the Five Points

area) would have had a much different environment than, say, that around Aoy School?

A. Very different. For example, my sister taught at Franklin, down in the Chihuahuita area, right after she got her bachelor's. The textbooks were hand-me-downs from Dudley or from Coldwell. I'm sure that the teachers who taught there worked very well with the youngsters. But I see people my own age who came from those schools whose parameters were set in a certain way. By: "Well, if only you can get this far, that will be wonderful, my dear." Inadvertent, perhaps, but they did set limited goals that way.

Q. Any general impressions, looking back at the whole experience?

A. I think the experience in the schools made chronic liars out of all us Mexican kids. At school we said we had practiced so and so in English with our parents, which we most certainly had not. I lied at school too about dietary things. We were supposed to have a good old American breakfast — eggs, bacon, orange juice, with a glass of milk, but my folks weren't early risers so there wasn't much time for that kind of breakfast. So we lied at school about what our home was really like.

And at home! Our parents were shocked that the school gave us so little work, so we lied and told them there was really a great deal of work and it was very hard, and we had done a lot extra at school, and so on.

Josefina (Pepina) Salas-Porras has different memories of Houston. She entered the school around 1931 and remembers nothing but "pleasant experiences," teachers putting arms around her, encouraging her. She remembers also that there were only a "few" Spanish speakers in her class and that on her first day on the playground she couldn't communicate with the other children because none of them spoke Spanish, but she doesn't remember whether there was a rule forbidding its use. However, she *did* say that her husband ("Pancho" Salas-Porras) recalls that *his* teacher at Lamar School spoke Spanish "like a Mexican" and recalls that whenever he didn't understand something she would give him a quick explanation in Spanish. (Obviously the "English-only" rule of those days was not of uniform application!)

She referred to some of her sister's experiences, being slapped on the hand for speaking Spanish, etc., and said, "I don't remember such things." The conversation shifted to her teaching days in the

public schools. She said, "When I started teaching in '46, *no* Mexican-American teachers were allowed to teach in the northside schools."

Q. Where were you?

A. I was at Franklin. Annie Grady was there and she had a staff of teachers that had been there, some of them 20 years, and as far as I can remember there was absolutely no negative attitude toward the children.

Q. Did you have an "English-only" policy there?

A. Well, I *think* there was. I don't really remember the rule of "don't speak Spanish," but we knew we weren't supposed to. I team-taught in first grade with a Mrs. Jones, who had been there a long time. We were a good team. I'd explain the concept quickly to the child in Spanish(!), and then we'd go right back to English.

Clearly the English-only rule did not bother this teaching team overly much.



Finally, as a contrast, let us listen briefly to some recollections of two people whose experiences were rather different.

Raymond Telles, former mayor of El Paso, former Ambassador of the United States, distinguished fellow citizen known to us all, began his schooling "around 1920," but *not* in the public schools. He was first enrolled in a private school run by a Luz Villalobos "in a tenement on 8th between Hill and Telles streets, alongside the canal. She rented a room there and set up this little school, where she taught us Spanish and how to read."

Q. And after Miss Villalobos' school?

A. My father sent me to St. Ignatius, on Park and 2nd, I think. But I only went there about six months when Dad decided I ought to go to a different school to improve my English. So he enrolled me in St. Mary's, at Myrtle and St. Vrain. And there the student body was 98% or 99% anglo. In other words, we were thrown into a situation where we *had* to learn and use English. But I had some advantages. I not only knew Spanish but I could read and write. And I knew something of arithmetic. So I got skipped into third grade.

Q. The reading and writing you were taught at that first little school was, as you said, in Spanish. Did you find that it carried over into English?

A. Oh yes, definitely.

Q. How long were you at St. Mary's?

A. I graduated from St. Mary's, seventh grade. And then I went to

Cathedral High School, and graduated from there.

Q. Your teachers, both at St. Mary's and at Cathedral, were they bilingual?

A. No, the teachers at St. Mary's were nuns and were English-speaking. Same way at Cathedral, though we did have language teachers, of course.

Q. Well, I gather from all this that you just flat didn't have any language problems.

A. I struggled a little when I first went to St. Mary's, when I found myself in an environment where there was *no* Spanish spoken.

Q. But the compulsion for you to learn English arose from the situation, and not from some artificial rules that only English could be used?

A. That's right. It was a natural situation that existed.

Q. How about the kids that stayed at St. Ignatius — did you keep track of any of them?

A. Not many. I think most of the St. Ignatius kids went to Bowie.

Q. Well, I was just wondering whether they might have had some language problems in high school.

A. I don't really know. I assume they must have. If you recall, they had all kinds of problems at Bowie High at that time. Wouldn't let them use Spanish, etc. They were being forced into using English, but in a different way from the way I was.



The final interviewee to be presented here did not attend El Paso schools at all, though she has taught in them. Rosa Apodaca now is Consultant for Bilingual Education, Grades 7-12, for the El Paso Public Schools.

She started school in Columbus, New Mexico, across the border from her home town of Las Palomas. New Mexico is legally and officially a bilingual state, and of course there was never any "English-only" practice. She recalls: "When I was a child starting school I had a teacher, Nell Valdez, an American who had very fluent Spanish. New Mexico is a little different from Texas (sic!). We were a group of Mexican kids who didn't know any English, and she took us into what was called a "pre-first." She taught us, and explained in Spanish to us...."

Q. When was this, Rosita?

A. About 1950.

Q. It would seem to me, then, that when all the new language-teaching gospel came in recently, it was nothing new to you. You had actually been through it.

A. Yes, the teachers were very supportive. They understood that we didn't speak English, and they put English in the program and carried us along (until we got a grip on it). By the time I finished *real* first grade they then put me in third grade because I was reading above everybody else's level. Nell had done a really fine job.

I remember some things, though. For example, in the 6th grade I scored highest on one of the standardized tests, even beating out an anglo boy who usually was the top. And they had me take the test over again, sitting at the teacher's desk. At the time I didn't understand why, but now I do. Similarly, in 7th grade every time I made an A+ on a test the teacher would take me to his desk and ask me the questions orally. I realized much later that they were not used to having someone who was not a native speaker of English score so well.

Q. It seems to me that their testing you like that, and their surprise that you were doing so well, might indicate that the other Spanish-speaking kids were *not* doing so well.

A. No, most of the Hispanic kids in our group were from very poor families, and they were not doing so well. Very few of them went on to high school. But many of the children did very well. A number of them own their own businesses now.

Q. And how's their English?

A. Very good.

Q. Native?

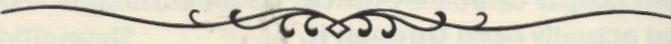
A. Absolutely!

In other words, the system that is relatively new in El Paso, and still the subject of some grumbling in places like letters-to-the-editor columns of our papers, worked very well all those years ago in New Mexico. And there was no reason, other than attitudinal, why it would not have worked equally well in Texas. Five unhappy decades might have been avoided had that 1918 Legislature been less vindictive, and less sure that they were striking a blow for Americanism.

Finally, it needs be said that there are many well-intentioned people (the parents of Spanish-speaking children frequently among them) who are still convinced that the English-only approach is really the answer to language problems confronted by the non-native speaker of English — but it is fair to say that few language teaching professionals are among them.★



WHAT'S IN A NAME

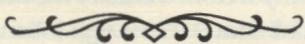


Leafing through Fred Tarpley's *1001 Texas Place Names* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1980), a West Texan notices, not surprisingly, that the name-origins of several communities located between El Paso and Fort Worth reflect the area's monumental enterprise of the 1880s — the construction of the Texas and Pacific Railroad — and also the concomitant hopes and dreams of the region's early settlers.

Take, for example, Odessa. Tarpley says that the earliest settlers "believed the rolling prairies resembled the steppes of Russia." In the hope that the land would produce abundant harvests of wheat and that the new town would become a shipping center of the vast area, "they named it for the wheat distribution center of the Old World at that time — Odessa, Russia." Other stories, the author adds, link the origin of the town's name to various people of that name — one to a little girl of the area who survived a massacre, another to a railroad man's Indian sweetheart, and still another to a local rancher's daughter.

As for Midland, Tarpley tells us that "Both the city and the county...are named for their location halfway between Fort Worth and El Paso." He explains that "the original name of the town was *Midway*, marking a post on the Texas and Pacific Railroad which was 307 miles equidistant from Fort Worth and El Paso" and that "the name was changed when Midland County was organized."

The town of Abilene was established on March 15, 1881, "when the Texas and Pacific Railway completed track to the townsite and an auction sale of lots was held. The founders, John Simpson and Colonel C. W. Merchant, believed that their Texas venture would become an even more important city than the Kansas cattle-shipping point after which it is named."



★ ★ MARK YOUR CALENDAR ★ ★

The El Paso County Historical Society Hall of Honor Banquet will be held at the El Paso Country Club on November 3, 1985, instead of November 17, as originally announced.



MAJOR W. J. FEWEL OF EL PASO

By Herb Marsh, Jr.

NO BOATING ON TEXAS STREET." That's what the sign said. Exactly who had stuck the homemade sign in the middle of the mud and water lake on Texas Street, no one ever knew or owned up to it. But the message was clear. The citizens were poking fun at Mayor Charlie Davis and his council as they wrestled with the hottest political issue of the moment — the need for paved streets in El Paso. Paving was seen as the biggest job ever proposed by a city council up to that time, requiring the expenditure of more city money than had ever been spent before on a single project.

One man who saw the humor as well as the urgency in the incident of the "NO BOATING" sign that morning was the Mayor's streets alderman and his good friend, Major W. J. Fewel. The street-paving proposal had no stronger advocate. And early in that year of 1905 the Mayor had talked the Major into running on his ticket with him for just that reason.¹

The council's agenda that same morning was full of other business. But the Major, a little miffed now at the annoying delays, abruptly announced he didn't give a hang if the council was attempting to hold a pink tea party at the moment, he was tired of the dillydallying, and the paving was to begin.

The paving did begin, of course. There is a grand photograph of the Major and others standing outside the Orndorff Hotel (site of the present Cortez Building) alongside the giant steam machine which began laying the first surface. The Major's daughter had just broken a

bottle of champagne on the machine's bow. And the occasion was genuinely momentous for all those who had been conducting their lives and trades up to that time along the dusty streets, or mud, as the case happened to be.

But the focal point of this article is not about street paving. It is about the spirit of the man who was behind that project.

His daughter called him Papa. His wife called him Mr. Fewel. And everyone else called him "the Major." He was round faced, bald-headed, and not very tall. But they said he could kick up a bigger fuss than any man twice the size. He had a strong personality, and his opinions were emphatic. Also, and most outstanding, he was a man of character.

It is really not as important that the paving of the streets was done, as it is that the Major had beforehand contributed money from his own pocket to grade and fill the old dirt streets at times when no public funds were available;² or that again at his own expense he had travelled to the eastern cities to find the best type of paving; or that the paving contractor who came to town told him that he was the only city official he had ever been able to walk comfortably down a street in public with because of his reputation for integrity; or, finally, that he could, just once, allow himself to run for public office for the sole purpose of accomplishing something specific, and not for personal pride.

Those same streets had actually been nothing but dirt since the Major first set foot on them in 1881. He had arrived on the first Santa Fe train to reach the site of the smelter and had hitched a ride the rest of the way into town. He saw El Paso as it originally was — a huddle of adobe houses fronting sandy roadways, the entire prospect unrelieved by any greenery at all, except the greasewood and mesquite. Stoudenmire had just arrived at that time with his own brand of justice. There was no hotel except an old adobe that had no fireplace. When Mrs. Fewel and the family joined him shortly thereafter, the Major and his sons took their meals at the only restaurant in town. But he had Mrs. Fewel's meals sent to her, being unwilling for her to eat at the restaurant because of the rough types who were usually there. Water to drink came straight from the river, and had to be settled, boiled and cleared before being potable.

The Major had come to El Paso by way of North Carolina and the Civil War. The first time he had left Princeton College to enlist in the Confederate Army, he was turned away because of his youth and

Major W. J. Fewel of El Paso



Major W. J. Fewel, prominent citizen of early El Paso. (Photo courtesy Judge and Mrs. Herb Marsh, Jr.)

smallness of stature. Same for the Confederate Navy. But later, as the southern army became somewhat impoverished, he was able to enlist in the North Carolina Infantry. He experienced combat and was soon a lieutenant. After one eventful battle, he was singularly called from the line by a Lieutenant Colonel Gregory who took him before

General Jos. E. Johnston to remark that he had never seen such coolness and bravery exhibited by anyone as had been exhibited by Lieutenant Fewel on that occasion. He was then granted a Captaincy, although the commission never came because of General Lee's surrender.

After the war, he married in North Carolina. But his wife died in childbirth a year later. He then moved to Missouri and served as Major on the staff of General Perry Catron in the United Confederate Veterans. It was there he met Euphemia Carrie Catron, his bride-to-be. And another part of southwest history is glimpsed here: her cousin was Tom Catron, who would play a dominant role in the political history of New Mexico.

For a while it was work in a bank. And then in the grocery business, where he later said his partner's six children ate up all the profits. Telling his wife he was going to find a better home, the Major spent one winter in Colorado, and then he heard of El Paso.

Once he had seen it, he retired for his wife and family. They lived in a two-room adobe until he built their residence in 1882 at the corner of San Antonio and Virginia streets. Constructed of redwood planks brought from California, it was to be their home for the next 35 years. This was the first frame house of any size in El Paso, a smaller one having been previously put up on Florence street. His first thought upon its completion was to have a green yard, but there wasn't a stand of grass in the entire town. So he had some Bermuda brought in from Austin, and soon produced the first turf in El Paso. Plugs of grass were taken from this yard and became the first grass at Fort Bliss and in the yards of his neighbors in the Magoffin-San Antonio Street area.³

With some of those neighbors — Zach White, B. Schuster, Joseph Magoffin and Ed Roberts — he organized the El Paso Coke and Gas Company, the first plant that furnished lights to the town. Mrs. Fewel lit the first gas jet on a February evening in 1884 at the small pioneer plaza.⁴ Somewhat paradoxically, having given the town its first source of coal-derived fire and light, he then proceeded to become an organizing member of the city's first volunteer fire company, El Paso Hook and Ladder Company No. 1.

The Major had incurred some debt in building the gas works, and not long afterwards an economic panic was gripping the country. He found it necessary to get funds and was offered a small price for a piece of property he owned at the corner of Overland and South El

Paso streets. He told the man he would sell it and sign a contract the next morning. Within an hour, another would-be purchaser offered him a much larger sum. Answering that he had already given his word, the would-be purchaser asked him whether he had signed a contract. Highly incensed, the Major declared that his word was as good as his bond and that those who knew him realized a written signature was not necessary once his word was given.

By this time, he had made other tangible contributions to the growing town, important in their own way. He had erected the first brick office building in town, which still stands with slight alteration on South El Paso Street, the main street of the day. The State National Bank, El Paso's oldest financial institution, began business in a home erected for it by the Major at El Paso and San Antonio streets.⁵ And when the county seat came to El Paso as a result of the infamous election of December, 1893, the county rented a building owned by Major Fewel on the corner of El Paso and Second streets. For a few months this was El Paso's first courthouse.⁶

One of his proudest achievements was organizing and being part owner of the city's first (mule-drawn) street car company. Some years later, when the mule cars were being replaced by electric cars, he reminisced about how he missed the "ride through the sand," and told how the mule car driver would always remove the mud from the ladies' shoes with his pocket knife, how the driver would baby-sit children on the car, deliver items from town to the residences, and stop and wait in front of a passenger's house if the resident was not quite ready to board. "There was no undignified racing toward the car," he said.

The Major had a rich sense of humor that made him a delightful companion. One particular story that survives him relates an incident that occurred while he was on a trip to New Orleans. Riding on some sort of public conveyance going out to Lake Ponchartrain, the Mayor suddenly announced so that all could hear him, "By Jove, the silvery Rio Grande!" Some man immediately took him up on his statement and said, "My dear Sir, that is Lake Ponchartrain. You are many miles from the silvery Rio Grande." Whereupon the Major announced to all that he was thoroughly familiar with the Rio Grande, that he knew it when he could see it, and that he was looking at the Rio Grande. The man remonstrated with him further, and the Major announced he would bet him \$50 to \$1 that he could prove it was the silvery Rio Grande. The man took the bet and said, "All right, how are

you going to prove it?" In response the Major said, "We will just take a vote of the good people here on this conveyance with us as to whether this is the silvery Rio Grande or Lake Ponchartrain." Since everyone was relaxed and having a good time, there were easily enough people with a sense of humor to give the Major a clear majority. Whereupon he collected the dollar from the man and went chuckling on his way.

He was sometimes asked if he was really a Major, and he would always say that if he hadn't come by the title the way he did, he would have gotten it anyhow when he came to Texas, since every little man who had a big voice and a big stomach was called "Major."

He avoided publicity in his giving, but people did take notice of his generosity. It was said that he always stood ready to go a decent man's bond until the man could tell his story in court. They also said that if he saw on the street any poor boy whose clothes were ragged he would lead the boy into some clothing store and order for him a new suit of clothes.

The principles he lived by were good enough for his family too. In the early days, when Mexico was a non-duty-paying country, it was common practice to go across the river and smuggle over cigars, perfumes, kid gloves and the like, because of their cheapness in Juarez. The Major never allowed any member of his family to do so, declaring that "stealing is stealing, whether one steals from an individual or from the government."

The Major came to El Paso because he was a pioneer. He was among others who came in 1881, a group of perhaps a dozen or so, who had more to do with shaping the destinies of the town than any other equal number of men has ever had. It is safe to say that the spirit of this city came from the Major and others like him. Moreover, his descendants here have contributed to that spirit, and have been a credit to him. He set high standards for himself and for his community. And more than that: he lived up to them.★

ACKNOWLEDGMENT: In addition to the notes listed below, the facts cited in this article come from notes or memoranda made by family members through the years (including those of Mrs. W. J. Fewel) and also from numerous newspaper articles and clippings which do not show their dates or sources.

NOTES

1. Martin Rice and W. H. Timmons, "Early El Pasoans' Names Live on in Sunset Heights," *El Paso Herald-Post*, October 12, 1983; Conrey Bryson, transcript of

(Notes continued on page 102)



OUR TOWN— ONE CENTURY AGO (April-June, 1885)

by Art Leibson

IN THE MID-1880s El Paso was still attracting notorious gun-fighters to the border, although the reform element was mobilizing support to combat the "Sin City" name recognized from coast to coast. Dallas Stoudenmire, the one-time law officer, had been killed here a few years earlier. John Selman, who was serving as a constable in 1885, later became a prime suspect in the killing of the west's most prominent gunman, John Wesley Hardin, named for the founder of Methodism and himself the son of a preacher. And Selman was also gunned down. George Scarborough, a deputy United States marshal, was tried for the shooting of Selman, but was quickly acquitted.

Historian Leon Metz, in his biography of Selman, gives graphic description of El Paso in those troubled years. It was, he asserts, "the kind of community that would attract a hard case character like John Selman. It was still a frontier settlement, isolated from civilization and from most of the restraining influences which were beginning to shackle other towns throughout the southwest. It was a wide-open, gun-toting, hell-raising, sin-soaked town sprawled at the gates of Mexico."

The El Paso Times, seizing every opportunity to denounce the rampant vice, observed that "the revised Old Testament will be published in a few days. It won't make any difference in El Paso — we intend to be just as wicked here as ever before." That was obviously

Mr. Leibson, an attorney-turned-newspaperman, retired from the staff of *The El Paso Times* in 1974. He is the author of this regular *Password* feature.

written either tongue-in-cheek or in recognition of the evil ways continuing on the border.

On the other hand, El Paso was still enjoying boom times from the coming of the railroads four years earlier. New homes were going up all over town, many using the new brick construction instead of the adobe and frame structures of the past. New churches were being built and new schools were being erected to serve the fast-growing population.

On April 6, 1885, El Paso's mushrooming growth and the attendant increase in crime along the border were recognized with the awarding of a United States District Court to serve West Texas and with the assignment of a federal judge. Shortly afterward, there occurred one of the biggest robberies in the area up to that time—and ironically just outside the jurisdiction of the United States Court. On the night of April 28, \$60,000 in bank notes being consigned to a bank in Chihuahua were stolen from a back room in the Mexican customs office across the river in Paso del Norte. Part of the money was recovered, and although the notes were invalid without the proper bank signatures some showed up later as forgeries.

In April, just about when local news began making a timid appearance on Page One of the *Times*, that newspaper initiated several crusades. It started with an inquiry about the construction of the courthouse, then in progress. On April 10 the *Times* demanded an explanation of a missing \$55,000 appropriated for the courthouse. The *Times* was just probing at this point. It was not yet onto the really big story that the contractors, after bidding on one contract, had proceeded under their own revised and cheaper plans.

Meanwhile, a seemingly unrelated event was taking place. A grand jury had been empaneled and after several days of hearing testimony it issued a report that started innocuously enough, recommending the firing of a chief jailor at the city jail for allowing a prisoner to escape. Then came the meat and potatoes of its report: it found many "well-sustained allegations of fraud and irregularity in the construction of a new courthouse" and recommended a probe into the case by the County Court. The fault, the jury found, lay with the architect or the contractor, and they should be prosecuted. The jury additionally scored Commissioners Court for allowing the only copy of the original plans for the courthouse to be taken out of the county by the contractors.

Immediately, the *Times* began lashing out almost daily and demanding action. A petition was printed, calling for a court of inquiry and was signed by hundreds of citizens. Several mass meetings were held as indignation ran high, nudged by the *Times*. Commissioners Court finally caved in and agreed to conduct an investigation.

Flushed with success, the *Times* struck out in other directions. It called for a new city charter, openly charging that the current charter had been drawn up for the benefit of three or four men who had enough influence in the State Legislature to get whatever they wanted. Next, it directed attention to the daytime stench in downtown El Paso, and urged an overhaul of the primitive and outgrown sewer system, proposing a bond issue to pay the cost. Then it demanded paved streets to meet the growing traffic needs, including the mule cars that were making the round trip to Paso del Norte.

A political campaign was shaping up, with two men who had helped start the *Times*, James Marr and Ben Schuster, running for mayor against R. C. Lightbody, who had opened the first men's clothing store in El Paso.

Social lines were being drawn throughout the city. The community and its civic leaders came to recognize the fact that there was a vast difference in public usefulness between a man who operated a national bank and one who operated a faro bank. Owen White, who lived through much of the early times and wrote about them in *Out of the Desert*, told us that C. R. Morehead, O. T. Bassett, and H. L. Newman, contracting for the grading work on 150 miles of Texas and Pacific right of way east of El Paso, had earned and divided a profit of \$75,000, the first "big money" ever made by local men from any industrial activity connected with the city. He also pointed out that Zach White, arriving about that time with \$10,000 sewed up in the back of his vest, quickly acquired status in the community by investing his money in a stock of groceries and general hardware instead of financing a gambling house.

On the lighter side, an amateur play was presented in El Paso by the Las Cruces Musical-Dramatic Club, "The Chief of the Mescaleros," a takeoff on the Pocahontas story, and it uncovered a new and surprising comedian in its cast, a Major Albert Fountain, the lawyer whose disappearance would later become a sensation of the Southwest. Also, baseball fever was still running high, and it was agreed to send a uniformed team to meet one in Albuquerque as

part of that city's July 4th celebration.

And two children of very prominent individuals visited our city during the month of May. One was Mary Lee, daughter of the Confederate general, who was met by a brass band serenading her at the Grand Central Hotel. The other was Brigham Young, Jr., oldest son of the Mormon patriarch, heading for Mexico in an effort to negotiate a settlement there for some of his people. The *Times* held out little hope for his success in a country where polygamy was as repugnant as it was in the United States.

The daily *Times* looked down contemptuously at its rival, the weekly *Herald*, whose offices had been bombed a few months earlier, sneering at a letter to the *Herald* protesting the County's spending \$25 a day on its investigation of the courthouse scandal. The *Times* printed its own letter to the editor, under the pseudonym "Observer," in which the writer detailed the failings of El Paso as a city. Part of the trouble, the letter observed, was that while the water, electricity, gas, and telephone operations were well managed, the prices charged for the utilities was too high, especially for the water.★



Gone to Heaven



The following paragraph is an excerpt from a research report on the history of San Elizario written by Andrew Alarcon, a student in Dr. Timmons' course on Historic El Paso, which was offered in the 1984 first summer term at The University of Texas at El Paso.

Perhaps the most famous legend of San Elizario concerns the hanging of Bartolo Mendoza in 1848. He was found guilty of murdering his stepdaughter and even admitted it. Residents said to him that since he would soon be face-to-face with God, would not he please ask God to send rain as the summer had been an extremely dry one. The day of his hanging was a bright, clear day, becoming warmer with the passing hours. At three in the afternoon the procession began to the hanging platform. There the noose was adjusted and in a second Mendoza would meet his death. The noose was placed around his neck and the platform gave way. No sooner had the procession started for the church when a few drops of rain fell. Within a short time it began to pour. Everyone knew that Bartolo Mendoza had gone to heaven!



THE "SKYSCRAPER" RESTORATION

By Hugh K. Frederick, Jr.

THE AMERICAN BANK OF COMMERCE operates out of a genuine historical landmark. Its building at the corner of Franklin and Stanton streets in downtown El Paso has been designated a state historical site by the Texas Historical Commission.

The "Skyscraper," as the building was called when completed in 1907, was designed by pioneer El Paso architect Edward Kneezell, and it represented many firsts in the El Paso area. Built to house the El Paso and Southwestern railroad offices, the building was a bold new approach to architecture in El Paso. Seven stories tall, it was truly the city's first skyscraper. Also it was the first building in the city to be supported by steel framework. Additionally, it boasted the city's first hydraulic elevators — two ten-passenger cars — which rode its vertical length. And, interestingly, because the building's second owners (the Southern Pacific Company) did not want to depend on outside sources for electricity, the "Skyscraper" was not served by the EL Paso Electric Company until 1981, depending instead on Southern Pacific-supplied power.

Kneezell, who died in May of 1926 in an El Paso hospital at the age of 71, was described in his *El Paso Herald* obituary as "a prominent pioneer ... and the first architect to live in El Paso." Born in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, Kneezell lived in Colorado before settling in El Paso. Other of his projects included the designing of Sunset and Morehead

Mr. Frederick is Chairman of the Board and Chief Executive Officer of the American Bank of Commerce of El Paso.

elementary schools, the City-County Hospital, and the Feldman Building in downtown El Paso. But, undoubtedly, Kneezell's foremost contribution to El Paso architecture was the "Skyscraper," the building which the American Bank of Commerce now calls home.

In 1924 El Paso and Southwestern Railroad sold out to the Southern Pacific Company for \$64 million. The "Skyscraper" went along with the transaction, and the new owners were proud of their building. The *Southern Pacific Bulletin* of November, 1924, described the "Skyscraper" as a

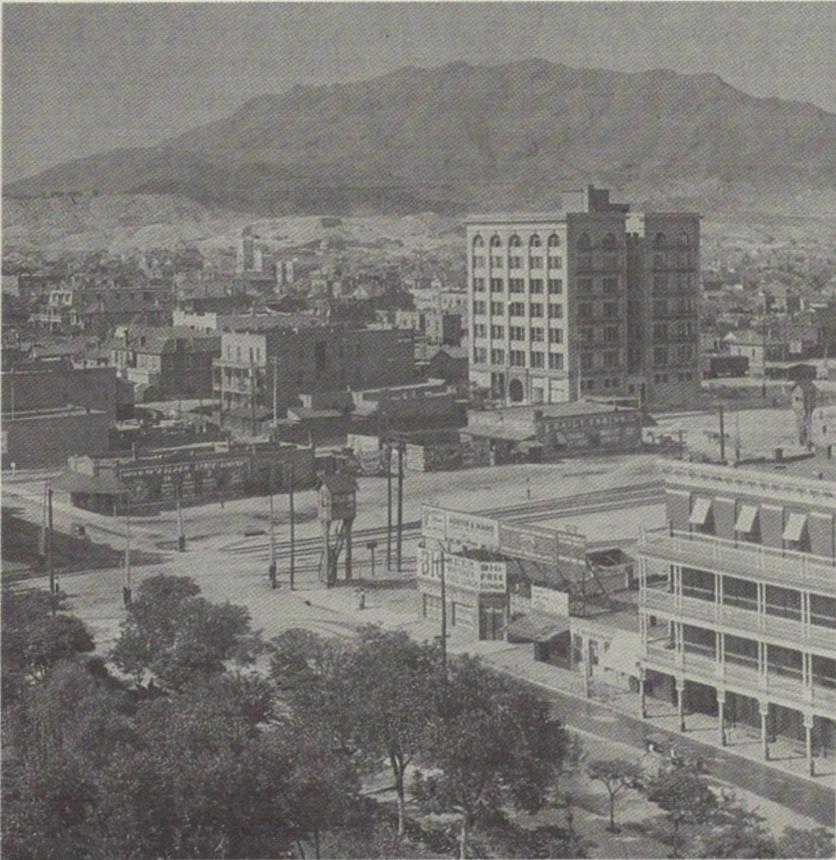
structure ... seven stories in height, white face brick exterior, with steel reinforcement. The dimensions of the building are 100 x 80 feet and it is equipped with two 10-passenger elevators. All of the offices have hardwood floors. The lobby and halls have tile flooring. Offices in the building all have outdoor air and light. . . . The main line of the Golden State Limited passes directly along the south side of the building and from the east windows, near at hand, may be seen the freight depots, yards and shops of the El Paso and Southwestern and (the) Galveston, Harrisburg & San Antonio (railroads).

Southern Pacific Company today still maintains offices on the fifth floor of the "Skyscraper." George Steele, who began working for Southern Pacific in 1943 as a teletype operator, remembers that the building had no air conditioning and that the railroad's main line ran right outside the open windows. Today, the railroad lines run underneath the building.

At the time, the proximity of the railroad's headquarters to its tracks was quite logical. But as the city spread northward, it became illogical to have the tracks bisecting some of the most valuable real estate in El Paso. Yet, for many decades railroad tracks did just that — divided downtown El Paso. To go from one business building to another, perhaps only a block away, sometimes required a considerable wait as a long freight train clickity-clacked its leisurely way through the city. Many were the late-arrivers to downtown appointments. "I had to wait for a train!" was the breathless excuse frequently uttered in those frustrating years. Sometimes, of course, it was a convenient excuse. Most of the time, it was legitimate.

El Paso's early railroad boosters had strongly advocated placing the tracks where they are today — smack in the heart of the business district. And when pioneer El Pasoan James P. Hague gave 30 downtown acres to Southern Pacific, the tracks were laid. In that pre-automobile time, the tracks posed few problems. El Paso's first automobile didn't trek the streets until 1906. The city's first traffic jam was still years away (and no doubt it happened because of the tracks).

The "Skyscraper" Restoration



The "Skyscraper" clearly dominates El Paso's central business district in this photograph taken in 1909. (Courtesy Southwest Collection, El Paso Public Library)

By the late 1940s, the situation had become intolerable. But with a simple idea — and millions of dollars — El Paso solved the problems caused by the bisecting tracks: the tracks would be depressed, put beneath the surface. In that way they would be out of the path of automobiles, and as a bonus El Pasoans could easily forget the headaches the trains had caused them because the trains could no longer be seen.

In 1950 the Bataan Memorial Trainway, the nation's first rail-depression project, was completed. No longer could late El Pasoans blame the trains for their fates. And the tracks that once skirted the "Skyscraper" now run beneath the parking lot of the American Bank of Commerce Building, the passing trains sometimes sending thundering rattles through the building.



The "Skyscraper" Restoration

So linked to trains and railroads is the "Skyscraper" that, until 1960, a steam engine (EP&SW Engine Number 1) rested in a small park beside the building. Built in 1857, it served the desert Southwest from 1889 until 1909, when it was retired to the park. When Southern Pacific donated the engine to the El Paso Centennial Museum in 1960, it was moved to the museum's location on the campus of The University of Texas at El Paso, where it sits today in its own glass-enclosed building. Student organizations at the University donate their time each year to clean and prime Ol' Number One.

In the last few years, the "Skyscraper" has undergone an extensive, one-million-dollar restoration and renovation, the project planned and supervised by architect John M. Carson of Carson Consultants, Inc. (AIA). The building's exterior glazed buff brick and terra cotta facade was restored to its original grace and magnificence with meticulous cleaning, some areas actually scrubbed by hand. Special attention was paid to the building's baroque arches, a distinctive feature borrowed from the design of the Chicago School of Architecture's building.

But the 77-year-old building's interior received the most attention. It was not only restored to its original elegance but was expanded as well, to allow for modern banking equipment and a pleasing atmosphere for customers. Warm earth tones are spread throughout the main floor, from the quarry tile laid in the entry-way to the rust-colored carpeting that enhances the lobby's natural charm. Oak paneling and highly polished granite surround the lobby, used with distinction on the walls and teller counters. The doors leading into the building are cut from solid oak and have beveled glass laid into them that casts glowing reflections from an 18-bulb, antique-brass chandelier.

The American Bank of Commerce board room on the fourth floor also received lavish attention during the renovation. Restored to its original style, the spacious room exhibits such traditional details as oak wainscoting and chair rails. New carpeting spills everywhere, except where the original hardrock maple floor is still intact.

In addition to the changes which restored the building to its turn-of-the-century splendor, security and fireproofing measures were strengthened and improved. And the major work was all accomplished without benefit of public funds, a fact which makes the

◀ Today, the "Skyscraper," restored to its original appearance, is the American Bank of Commerce Building. (Photo courtesy American Bank of Commerce).



Displaying the State Historical Site marker now affixed to the "Skyscraper" are Hugh K. Frederick, Jr., American Bank of Commerce, along with, l., Mrs. F. Cathcart Melby and, r., Colonel (ret.) James Ward of the Markers Committee of the El Paso County Historical Commission. The marker reads in part, "This building reflects the importance of El Paso as a major rail center." (Photo courtesy American Bank of Commerce)

American Bank of Commerce very proud. To demonstrate its accomplishments in restoration and renovation, the bank conducts public tours through the building during banking hours. A feature of the tour is the modest but valuable collection of railroad items on display in the lobby. The bank wishes to keep securely forged the link between its building's history and the railroad — and welcomes any donations of railroad memorabilia to add to its collection.

Today, the "Skyscraper" stands in unassuming dignity on its busy downtown corner. Although it may seem overwhelmed by the city's newer skyscrapers, it cannot be overlooked nestled in the skyline. It was the first of its kind in El Paso, and now — faithfully restored to its original beauty and grace — it well serves its present function. And more besides: it is a pleasant reminder of that early time when the railroads galvanized a quiet river village into vigorous growth.★

• A TIME TO REMEMBER •



UPSON'S LAST STAND

By Florence G. Brunner

A FEELING OF APPREHENSION pervaded our usually peaceful, happy 1500 block of Upson Avenue. Under normal conditions, children played back and forth across the almost dead-end street with little fear of traffic, rode tricycles and skated on the coarse cement sidewalks, begged ice from the iceman's wagon, and ran home for nickels to buy Kimozie's "frozen dainties" when the hand-pushed cart came by.

That block on Upson, our house at 1521, and "the canyon" at the street's end, now merely the arroyo between Sunset Heights and the present site of The University of Texas at El Paso campus, have been for many years the source of happy memories as I was growing up. There were the Gillespies, "Aunt Mamie" and "Uncle Bill," who loved all the neighborhood children, fed us raisins and sang with us in their big house on the corner; the H. D. McGregor girls and the R. R. Seeds children, who were my playmates and fellow pupils in Mrs. E. A. Powers' kindergarten at 1510 Upson; and, of course, there were my parents, the Neal Grosheidlers, who mended broken dolls, bandaged scratched knees, and fashioned such nice surprises at Christmas.

But this was March of 1916, and on the ninth of that month and year, all America was horrified by the brutal attack upon the unsuspecting town of Columbus, New Mexico, by Mexican bandit

Mrs. Brunner, a native El Pasoan, is a retired teacher of English and Speech in the El Paso Public Schools. She is a past president of the Woman's Club of El Paso and is also active in other social and civic organizations in the city.

Pancho Villa; and now rumors grew into fear that Villa would indeed march upon El Paso.

He would cross the river at Smelter Town, they said, possibly being reinforced by sympathizers there, and make his way along Smelter Road to Hart's Mill, site of today's Hacienda Restaurant, where "the canyon" at the end of our street emptied toward the Rio Grande. It was only logical that Villa's forces would follow the canyon as far as the footpath up to Upson Avenue. The possibility became so real that suddenly our canyon, which had been a friendly place for finding pretty rocks and wild flowers on Sunday afternoon hikes or for peering awesomely from its edge at rushing torrents after summer rains, now became menacing. Especially when my father took my mother and me there to learn to shoot: Mother, his .22, and me, his antiquated pistol.

After this brief training in the use of firearms, our house was readied for any contingency, with my father's shotgun in a corner of the front hall beside the door, the .22 by the kitchen door, the pistol beside his bed, and butcher knives in strategic locations elsewhere. All along the block other homes were making similar preparations. And the Army families who occupied apartments in "The Earl," just a vacant lot away from our house, were moved out to Fort Bliss for safety — a development which only heightened the fears in the civilian neighborhood.

As the days passed and the time figured necessary for the Villistas' approach to El Paso wound down, tension increased, particularly in our household, for my father had been selected for jury duty in the 41st District Court. (Was it really possible that unimportant matters like the course of justice should serenely flow when Life and Death were at stake on Upson Avenue?) On the very night that Villa was expected, my father telephoned from the courthouse to say that the jury was still deliberating and was to be locked up for the night. Shattered, my mother put down the telephone receiver, squared her shoulders, and faced the terrifying possibility of fending off the Villistas alone. There was one ray of hope, however: my father had told her that if the jury could reach a verdict by ten o'clock, Judge Price would come down, hear it, and release the jurors so they could get home to their families.

Meanwhile, John Carothers — big, friendly Golden State Limited conductor — and Mrs. Carothers, who were our second-door neighbors, insisted that Mother and I spend the night at their house.

Furthermore, Richard Warren, E.P. & S.W. General Agent, who lived in the last house toward the canyon on our side of the street, planned a watch from the upstairs porch of his house, his older son, their Chinese cook, and himself standing a two-hour watch each.

With this reassurance Mother and I gathered up our nightclothes and went to the Carothers' house, where, after supper, it was decided to put our trust in the Lord and the Warrens and to settle down for the night. However, before these plans could be put into effect, a phone call told us that my father was on his way home.

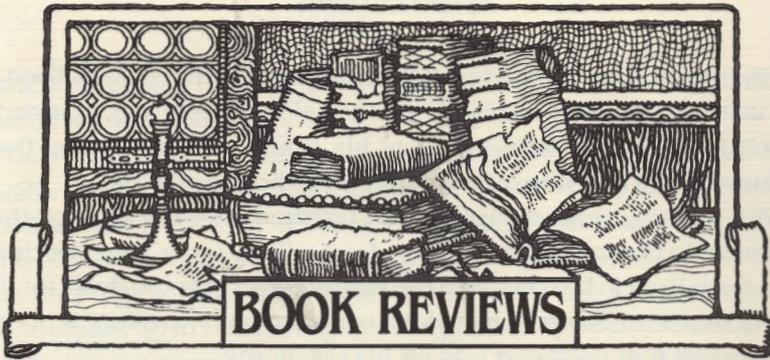
I can't speak for my mother and father, but, after all the excitement and moving back and forth, I slept soundly until morning.

What a letdown to awake to the discovery that nothing had happened! Mr. Warren and his son each had stood watch, but the cook, when his turn came, could not be found. In the morning, when all was safe, he came out from under his bed in the basement where he had spent the night shivering in fear of the Villistas.

This was to be the last Villa-inspired home-defense for Upson Avenue's 1500 block, for on March 15, the papers headlined the welcome news that General John J. "Black Jack" Pershing had crossed into Mexico on a punitive expedition in pursuit of Pancho Villa.★



The soft drink Dr. Pepper was invented in a Waco, Texas, drugstore in 1885. The (Dallas-based) Dr. Pepper Company is planning to restore as a museum the ornate 1906 Waco bottling plant, which suffered extensive damage during a tornado in 1953. The exterior of the building will be restored to its pre-1953 appearance, and the interior will be remodeled to include a replica turn-of-the-century drugstore, similar to the one that gave birth to Dr. Pepper. Overall, the museum will reflect the economic, social, and cultural history of Waco and central Texas. The building has been approved for listing in the Federal Register of Historic Buildings.



CAPITALISTS, CACIQUES, AND REVOLUTION: THE NATIVE ELITE AND FOREIGN ENTERPRISE IN CHIHUAHUA, MEXICO, 1854-1911 by Mark Wasserman. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, \$27.

The author, who teaches history at Rutgers University, conducted much of his research in El Paso for this highly significant contribution to the history of this region. His focus is the Terrazas family of Chihuahua and the developing influences on the revolutionary movement.

Wasserman finds that the Terrazas family rose to power in three stages: the 1850s, when Luis Terrazas became governor, through the years of French intervention and the Juarez and Lerdo presidencies, when he became not only politically powerful but very wealthy; the years from 1876 to 1902 when Diaz sought primacy in the region; and, finally, 1902 to 1911 when the Terrazas "turned the state into a family fiefdom."

The family fortune was secured through cattle exportation to the United States over a 20-year period, giving the Terrazas the economic strength to withstand the Diaz efforts to weaken their hold on Chihuahua. The family also was involved with foreign investors, especially in the essential mining industry. But the lack of control in management of the mining operations, says Wasserman, "ultimately would prove the family's undoing."

The circumstances for revolution — depression, drought and political unrest — had occurred in Chihuahua in 1877-79, 1884-86, and 1891-95, but, it was not until the more severe depression of 1907 that the people, who included a new middle class, reacted. The Terrazas regime by this time had grown "haughty and unresponsive," Wasserman says, and the middle class and small landowners "had no recourse but to rebel."

A revealing part of this study is devoted to analysis of the economic factors leading to revolution in a Latin American setting where the wealthy exercised great power. Chihuahua, the author points out, differed from other parts of Mexico in that export-oriented economic development led to the rising middle class and a relatively privileged working class in northern Mexico. When the revolution came, in Chihuahua it involved the middle-class, peasant-worker coalition.

The role of the Terrazas interests, the economic level of the revolutionaries, and the presence of foreign investors do not fit usual theories of how revolutions are born. Wasserman has illuminated these elements unique to Chihuahua's role in the Mexican revolution.

NANCY HAMILTON

Associate Director, News and Publications Office
The University of Texas at El Paso.



WATER IN THE HISPANIC SOUTHWEST, A Social and Legal History, 1550-1850 by Michael C. Meyer (University of Arizona Press, \$26.00).

The price tag on this slender volume, 189 pages, makes it at once a candidate for a place on some wealthy water-lawyer's bookshelf. He may find it very useful, too, for water has been a subject for highly specialized litigation ever since the first Europeans in these arid lands came in contact with the native populations and tried to establish workable water rights.

In detailing the efforts to settle the unavoidable conflicts, the author comes up with a useful word, *ecolturation*. It may be of his own manufacture, a combination of "ecology" and "culture" — thus: the development of a culture in which the populations and their environment are brought into working relationship. Or perhaps the author puts it better: "the goal of *ecolturation* was to blend competing forces into a new natural harmony in which the desert would yield to domestication and ultimately become a garden." It is a big order, as is frequently evident along the entire expanse of one of the oldest rivers in the area surveyed, the Rio Grande.

The reader may regret that the author stopped at about 1850, the year when the United States defined the boundaries of the vast desert expanse it had just acquired from Mexico — and thereby introduced a new conflict: between United States law, largely derived from old

England, and Spanish-Indian water laws. But the author wisely limits his discussion to the conflicts which had developed earlier.

A vast amount of "ecolturation" was required to adapt Spanish, and later Mexican, water policies to those of the Indians. The latter had been here a long time. In the Chaco Canyon area of northwestern New Mexico, they had developed a water system that effectively served some ten thousand people. At Mesa Verde in Colorado, they had built a canal ten miles long, running along the high mesas above the plains and streams below. On the site of modern Phoenix, they had built ancient canals that in some respects served as a guide for modern irrigation systems. Yet, their native philosophy seemed to be that water, even more so than land, is the property of the Great Spirit, and cannot be "owned" by a mere mortal. He must borrow it, and return it in the best condition possible.

The reader finds himself asking again and again if we could learn a few lessons in "ecolturation" from these ancient inhabitants of our land.

CONREY BRYSON
El Paso



THOSE WHO CAME BEFORE by Robert H. Lister and Florence C. Lister. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, \$11/\$32.50.

Subtitled *Southwestern Archeology in the National Park System*, this handsome volume contains basic information on Southwestern pre-history as developed during a century of study. Included are 15 exquisite color photographs of ruins and Indian rock art by David Muench, numerous black and white prints by Park Service photographers and others, and several excellent 40- to 50-year-old views of ruins by George A. Grant that are published here for the first time.

The Listers present two perspectives on Southwestern pre-history: a chronological description that focuses on perceived differences among archeologically defined local traditions and "An All-Southwestern Interpretation" that emphasizes shared stages of achievement throughout the region.

In the chronology section, the authors briefly consider the environment and describe what is known of the earliest stages of human occupation in the Southwest. They then treat — in temporal sequences — the well-known Southwestern archeological cultures:

the Hohokam of the southern Arizona desert, the Anasazi of the north central plateau, and the Mogollon of the intervening mountain zone, including the El Paso area. They also point out the presence in each culture of variations from the "typical" — and even devote a few paragraphs to those differences which merit the designation of independent minor cultures.

In the section entitled "An All-Southwest Interpretation," the Listers concentrate on similarities that are recognizable throughout Southwest pre-history. Focusing on different sized aggregates of dwellings — camps (before 300/100 B.C.), hamlets (300/100 B.C. to A.D. 500/700), villages (A.D. 500/700 to 1000/1100), and towns (A.D. 1000/1100 to 1450/1600), they argue that a meaningful and verifiable understanding of the behavior that led to the fabrication of such aggregates must be based upon testable models of the relevant human adaptive system. An example of such a model is referenced in the statement that the society responsible for the monolithic towns, signal outposts, roadways, and exotic trade goods of the Chaco phenomenon "functioned in a structured production and redistribution organization." Studies employing theoretical constructs of this type were just beginning a few years ago when Robert Lister retired as director of the National Park Service's Chaco Center.

The final and major portion of the book is devoted to descriptions of the discovery, exploration, and preservation of the archeological remains in each of 28 National Parks and Monuments in Arizona, New Mexico, Colorado, and Utah. Only such sites are discussed "because in them most facets of Southwestern archeology are presented in readily accessible localities complete with interpretive personnel, explanatory visitor center exhibits, and facilities to further the enjoyment and education of hundreds of thousands of people who annually visit the parks." Visitors to the various sites will appreciate the descriptions, photographs, and lists of additional readings that are included in the book.

It must be noted that this is not a history of the development of Southwestern Indian Society. That is a goal toward which archeology still strives. However, the Listers have provided a valuable synopsis of what may be thought of as a history of Southwestern technological development by "those who came before."

REX E. GERALD
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❖ A SCHOLARLY ARTICLE OF INTEREST ❖

Password compliments Colonel (Ret.) Francis J. Kajencki, a member of the El Paso County Historical Society, for his excellent article which appeared in the Autumn 1984 issue of the prestigious historical quarterly *Arizona and the West*. Entitled "Alexander Grzelachowski, Pioneer Merchant of Puerto de Luna, New Mexico," the article chronicles the story of an out-of-the-ordinary pioneer of Territorial New Mexico.

According to Colonel Kajencki's research, the Polish-born Grzelachowski came to the United States around 1850 as a young priest who had been recruited to serve in the area of Cleveland, Ohio. Then in 1851 he traveled with Bishop Lamy's party to Santa Fe, ministered to various parishes in the Territory, became a United States citizen in due course, actively served the Union during the Civil War, and gave up the ministry. After the war, "Padre Polaco," as he was affectionately called, entered the mercantile business, prospering in Las Vegas and, later, in the hamlet of Puerto de Luna, where he "was the leading citizen ... for over twenty years" and "widely admired for his education, amiability, and integrity."

Colonel Kajencki, who makes his home in El Paso, is also the author of *Star on Many a Battlefield*, a biography of Civil War Brevet Brigadier General Joseph Kargé (1827-1892).

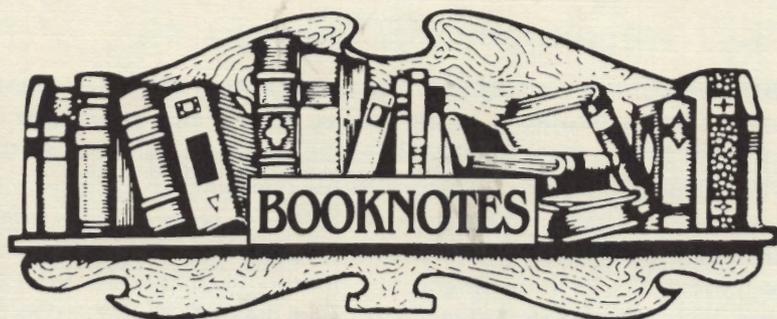


Major W. J. Fewel from page 84

- KTSM Radio Broadcast "Builders of El Paso," November 25, 1939.
- 2. Owen White, *Out of the Desert: The Historical Romance of El Paso* (El Paso: McMath Company, 1923), 368; Rice and Timmons.
- 3. C. L. Sennichsen, *Pass of the North*, Vol. 1, (El Paso: Texas Western Press, 1968), 260; Rice and Timmons; Bryson.
- 4. Sennichsen, 232; White, 167; Rice and Timmons.
- 5. White, 368; Rice and Timmons.
- 6. White, 186, 368; Rice and Timmons.



The first graduating class of El Paso High, the class of 1887, consisted of two pupils. At this time, the school was located at the corner of Myrtle and Campbell streets.



OUTLAW: ON THE DODGE WITH BALDY RUSSELL by C. L. Sonnichsen.
Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press/Swallow Press, \$9.95

In C. L. Sonnichsen's *Ten Texas Feuds* (1957) there is a chapter on the Truitt-Mitchell feud in Hood County, Texas, in 1874. From that fascinating and sanguinary business, grew a separate book, published in 1965 by the small Denver-based Sage Books, an imprint of Swallow Press.

This handsome new edition of *Outlaw* brings back a book that should never be out of print to begin with. In chronicling the life of Bill Mitchell, alias Baldy Russell, alias John Davis, Sonnichsen brought to full fruition his abilities as a "grassroots historian." Forty years ago, when Sonnichsen was tracing Mitchell's trail, he was even able to interview a man, D.C. Cogdell, age 96, who had witnessed the execution by hanging of Mitchell's father in 1875. And that execution was the beginning of the incredible tale that *Outlaw* tells. Mitchell, eleven years after his father's death, avenged the hanging by killing a man named James Truitt, then disappeared into the New Mexico wilderness where he lived, married, and had a family. Thirty-three years after he killed Truitt, Mitchell was arrested (March, 1907), convicted and sent to Huntsville. He escaped in 1914 and spent the rest of his life — another 14 years — "on the dodge." He died in 1928 in Sam Simon, Arizona, as "John Davis."

Sonnichsen's renowned ability to take fragile oral testimony and the recollections of old-timers, substantiate it, and weave it into first-rate history, was never better illustrated than in *Outlaw*.

He had a tough time selling this book. Publishers in the 60s, as now and forever, were notoriously shy about books on "obscure" people and events. Nobody ever heard of Bill Mitchell or Baldy Russell, nobody had ever written the story *before* — therefore, in that species of reasoning that is the exclusive domain of publishers, there was something suspicious about the whole thing. But Alan Swallow of Sage Books took a chance on it and gave to Western history a truly unique work. It is good to see *Outlaw* once again available.

DALE L. WALKER

Director, News & Publications Office
The University of Texas at El Paso

THE GILA TRAIL: THE TEXAS ARGONAUTS AND THE CALIFORNIA GOLD RUSH by Benjamin Butler Harris. Edited and annotated by Richard H. Dillon. Norman: The University of Oklahoma Press, \$6.95.

The California gold rush of 1849 attracted thousands to its hugely rich fields in northern California, but the trek itself has no doubt produced more in the way of literary gold — reminiscences, travel accounts, and the like — than the real thing for the many who made the long and hazardous trip. One group, the so-called Texas Argonauts, pursued the route known as the Gila Trail. Originating in east Texas, it moved leisurely along a curiously circuitous path through the modern states of Texas, Chihuahua, Sonora, Arizona, and California. One of its members, Benjamin Butler Harris, left a lively and informative account of this lengthy journey.

His detailed narrative, recently reissued in paperback, reveals much about life in a rugged and punishing country in the mid-19th century, all seen through the eyes of this discerning native of Tennessee. The indigenous people, Indians and Mexicans, were quaint if not exotic; the arid landscape, bleak and threatening; and his fellows on the trail, often comic but occasionally given to outbursts of violence. The descriptions of flora and fauna are particularly illuminating, informing us how much this magnificent part of our continent has changed over the past 130 years, unfortunately not for the better.

KENNETH B. SHOVER
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ARIZONA'S DARK AND BLOODY GROUND by Earle R. Forrest. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, \$11.95.

Funny thing. Everyone has heard of the Lincoln County War of New Mexico, but the Pleasant Valley War of Arizona remains obscure.

Lincoln's was an economic struggle essentially between businessmen who chose up sides and employed outside guns. The Pleasant Valley War, sometimes known as the Graham-Tewksbury feud, was a range war in its purest, most deadly sense. It started in 1886 when a herd of sheep crossed the Mogollon Rim into Pleasant Valley (the Tonto Basin) and invaded what had always been cattle country. It ended a few years later with most of the participants dead.

This is a reprint of a book originally published in 1936. It remains the best on the subject, a saga of courage as well as man's refusal to compromise.

LEON METZ
Public Affairs Officer
MBank El Paso



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