

# PASSWORD



THE EL PASO COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

VOL. XXXI, NO. 4

EL PASO, TEXAS

WINTER, 1986

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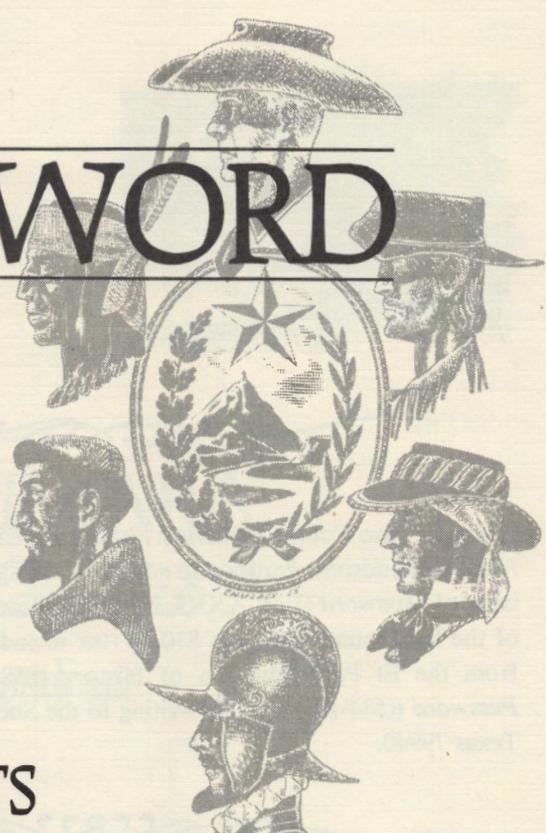
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The El Paso County Historical Society is pleased to offer its members and friends a handsome hardbound edition of the special Texas Sesquicentennial issue of *Password* (Vol. XXXI, No. 2, Summer, 1986). The price per copy of the hardbound edition is \$10.00 (tax included). Copies may be ordered from the El Paso Museum of History (858-1928), from the editor of *Password* ((584-1026), or by writing to the Society, P.O. Box 28, El Paso, Texas 79940.



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# TARAHUMARA UPRISING, 1918

by Eugene H. Boudreau

**H**OSTILITIES BETWEEN THE INDIANS OF NORTH America and the intruding Europeans began with Lief Erickson's settlement of Vineland, endured a 500-year hiatus following the abandonment of that Viking colony, and picked up again in 1492 on the first of Columbus' voyages to continue for more than 400 years. One of the last armed efforts to resist White domination occurred in the spring of 1918, when some of the Tarahumara Indians, with assistance from the neighboring Tepehuan tribe, of the area of the Sierra Madre Occidental lying in southwest Chihuahua and northeast Sinaloa, attempted to exterminate all the Mexicans (meaning the non-Indian people) inhabiting what had been those Indians' ancestral lands. Although this tribe, some 50,000 strong, has been studied by several American anthropologists since 1918, there is no mention of the uprising in the literature. In part, the oversight is due to the isolated locality (the *barranca* part of the Sierra), as well as to the fact that none of the investigators has even been there. This is a region that was roadless then, and remains so today.

This issue's title-page insignia, an imaginative depiction of a Christmas Past at the Pass, is the work of **William Chancellor**, a commercial-art student at El Paso Community College.

Memory of the *levantamiento* (uprising) is still fresh in the minds of the local Mexicans, although I have been unable to elicit much comment about it from the Indians. The Mexican stockmen, subsistence farmers, and miners and their families are afraid that the Indians may be out for their blood again some time, for an outbreak was barely averted at Piedras Verdes in 1958. As I heard an elderly Mexican remark just last year, "The Indian is the worst enemy we have."

Being a geologist and a native Californian, I introduced myself to the Sierra Madre in 1960 when I visited old silver and amethyst mines in the vicinity of Cuitaboca in northeast Sinaloa. Don Esteban Olguín, a Hemingwayesque-character-looking old man, white of hair and mustache, made me aware (though my command of Spanish was feeble at the time) that in 1918 there had been trouble with the Tarahumaras and that all the Mexicans from Cuitaboca had fled to the coastal lowlands. He went on to say that the Indian menace had been quelled when soldiers trapped the Indians in a canyon and killed many of them.

In the early 1970s I met a blacksmith-miner, Filiberto Gomez, in the village of Agua Caliente de Zevada, which nestles against the western flank of the Sierra about twenty miles southwest of Cuitaboca. He had grown up in a village called La Gaita, located in Chihuahua near the old silver town of Morelos, and he remembered "as in a dream" the foul-smelling wounds of the Indians' arrow-pierced victims who had been brought to Morelos, where his family and all the other Mexicans of the region had gathered for refuge and defense.

Gomez provided me with my first general account of the uprising, and in traveling with him through Morelos, to Batopilas in Chihuahua, and to Choix in Sinaloa, I came in contact with other people who had witnessed the events. In San Ignacio I talked with an old Tarahumara of diminutive stature named José Ortiz. A boy at the time, Ortiz was one of the three survivors of the Indian attack on Santa Inez. He had saved himself by being fleet of foot. I also met Chito Martinez, a blacksmith-tinker, who related that his father had been in on the final battle at El Rincón, firing at a running Indian but hitting the Indian's dog that was following behind.

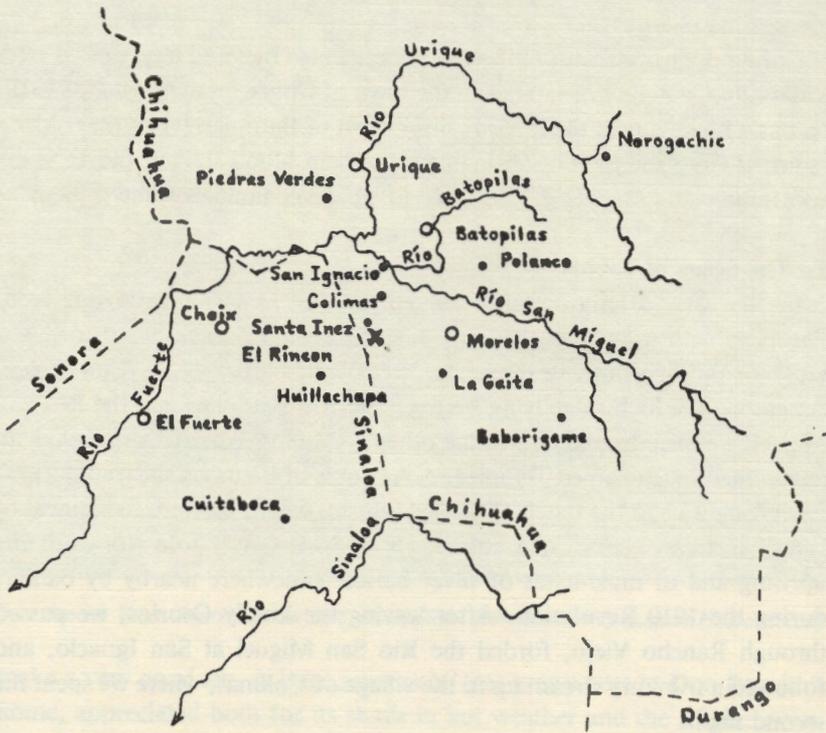
Maximiano Chavez, an old Tarahumara who had been on the side of the Mexicans at El Rincón, serving as a carrier of supplies, was a well-off rancher living above Huillachapa when I taped his story. Chavez, husband of

---

**Eugene H. Boudreau**, a resident of Santa Rosa, California, and the author of three books on the Sierra Madre, is a consulting geologist who annually visits the region of the Tarahumara. He also imports and sells Tarahumara crafts to museum gift shops in Los Angeles and San Francisco.

LEGEND

- Village or ranch
- Town
- ✕ El Rincon battlefield



Scale:  
 ────────────  
 30 miles

Map of the region of the Tarahumara in the Sierra Madre Occidental.  
 (Courtesy Eugene H. Boudreau)

an aunt of the blacksmith-miner Filiberto Gomez, told of how the insurgent Indians (who call themselves the Rarámuri) considered themselves to be the children of God and the Mexicans (whom they called *chabochis*, meaning "bearded-ones") to be the children of the Devil. Chavez spoke of how their leader, an *hechicero* (witch doctor) named Nicolas, had convinced them that he had made them immortal and that those being killed in battle would come back to life on the Day of San Juan, June 24, at the time of the beginning of the all-important summer rains when the San Juan bush is covered with its

blood-red flowers. Nicolas had also convinced them that they would not only be alive again, but as they had been in the prime of their lives. (In the year 1644, a Jesuit priest, Perez de Ribas, had written about an *hechicero* who had employed a promise of immortality in order to incite revolt by Indians in the Sierra.)

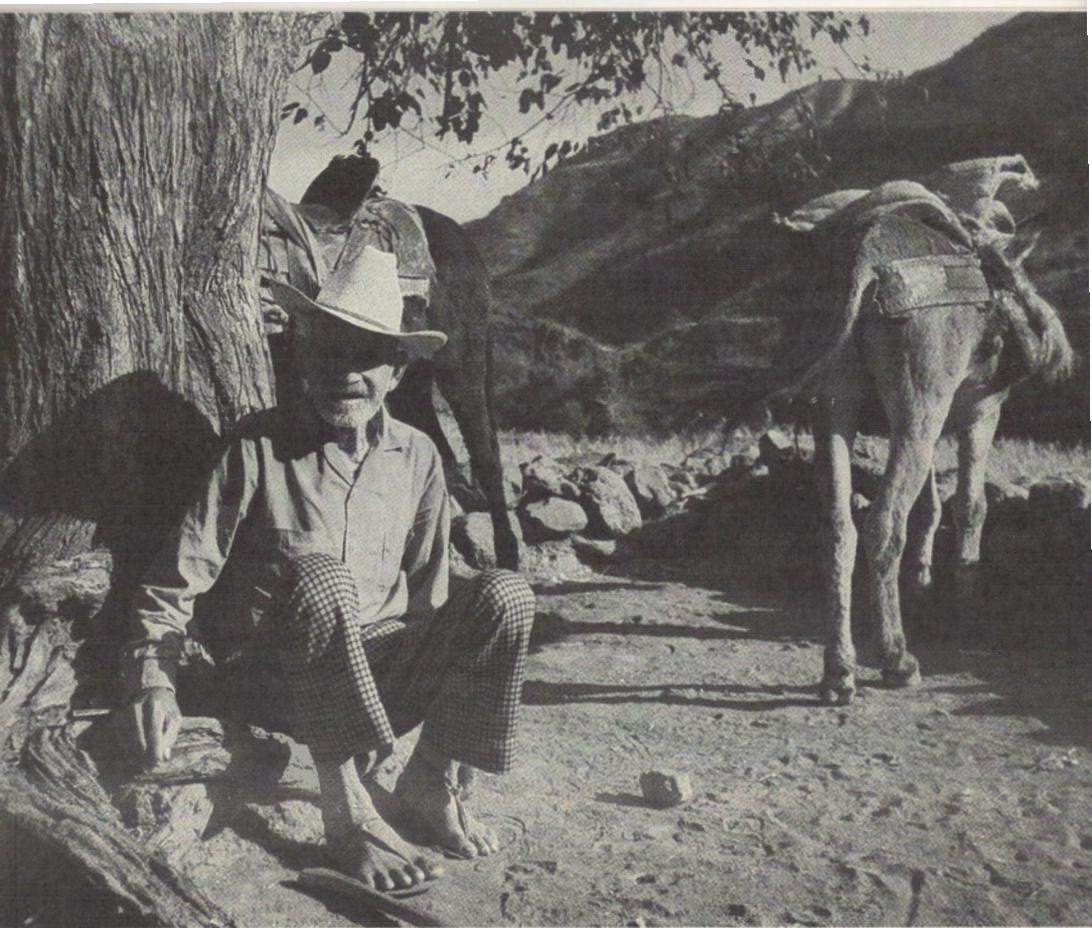
During my travels with Filiberto Gomez, I also met and interviewed Don Vidál Lugo, a maker of sandals in the town of Choix. In the spring of 1918, he was a boy living in the famous silver town of Batopilas when the soldiers returned from the fighting, bringing with them blood-stained Indian clubs and Indian children whom they gave to whatever families wanted them.

### To The Scene of Events

In the early afternoon of a November day in 1982, I set out from Batopilas with a guide-packer, a riding mule, and a pack-burro to pay a visit, for the first time, to the actual sites of the battles of 64 years before. Ascending the high ridge lying between the Rio Batopilas and the Rio San Miguel, we then dropped down the other side to make a dry camp below an abandoned ranch named Tempizque. A couple of hours on the trail the next day brought us to the ranch of Rafael Osorio, where we were fed a meal of beans, tortillas, cheese, and coffee. He and his family told stories of the uprising and of mule-loads of silver buried somewhere nearby by bandits during the 1910 Revolution. After leaving the kindly Osorios, we passed through Rancho Viejo, forded the Rio San Miguel at San Ignacio, and followed a tributary stream up to the village of Colimas, where we spent the second night.

By mid-afternoon of the third day we were unloading and unsaddling in the patio of the home of Don Pancho Vega, one of a scatter of five or six adobe houses that compose Santa Inez. We were greeted with the customary openhanded hospitality offered any civil traveler in the Sierra, and when I said I had come to collect information on the 1918 *levantamiento* they told me that I was the first person ever to visit them for this purpose. Indeed, they said that I would be the first *Americano* to visit the nearby battlesite at El Rincón.

Santa Inez had been settled by members of the Vega family about 1900. They had selected a wide spot in the Barranca de Santa Inez where they had built their homes, cleared land for pastures and cornfields, piled the abundant rocks into walls, and planted an orchard of orange, lime, mango, and papaya trees. A patch of sugarcane supplied a small mill where the cane juice was boiled down to make the brown sugar called *piloncillo*. The few avocado trees around the homes do not bear fruit, but the leaves are used to



*Don Pancho Vega, Rancho Santa Inez, Chihuahua. (Photo courtesy Eugene H. Boudreau)*

make a very good tea. A large *guamuchil* tree grows next to Don Pancho's home, appreciated both for its shade in hot weather and the edible, sweet, stringbean-shaped seedpods. The area is high enough for sycamores to grow along the clear-flowing creek, oaks on the slopes above, and pines on the crests of the ridges.

Don Pancho was a frail old gentleman, quavery of voice and clear of mind. He had been away at school in the village of Polanco when Santa Inez was attacked and had thus avoided being among the victims. A brother, Ramón, had also survived because he was off on a trip to San Ignacio at the time.

About eighty yards from the house of Don Pancho was a large tomb of rock and lime mortar containing the bones of the nineteen men, women, and children killed in Santa Inez on a long-ago April morning.

The following day I went with a grandson of Don Pancho's to photograph the battlefield at El Rincón, which was located about an hour's walk upstream on a side canyon. At El Rincón there was a cornfield and the mud-and-wattle-constructed home of the Tarahumara owner, whose chil-

shotguns, but most were armed with clubs and bow and arrow. (The bow and arrow, with a long sharp tip of brasilwood, is still used for hunting.)

At least one Indian had told the Vega clan of impending violence, but his warning had been ignored. The early morning onslaught came as a sudden and complete surprise, and apparently there was no resistance. Overrun first was the place where the boy José Ortiz was working, with one man killed and another left for dead. Then the people in the houses were rounded up and taken to the home of Pancho Vega's parents, the boy Pancho and his brother Ramón being away at the time. There, the men and boys were cut down. Although the women tried to save themselves and their children with offers of money and jewelry, they did not live much longer. One of Ortiz's fellow workers, who survived in spite of multiple wounds, later told Ortiz that one woman was strung up by her heels on a rope tossed over a limb of the big *guamuchil* tree and beaten with clubs. Ortiz, whose fleet feet had carried him far from Santa Inez by then, later learned that this woman had revived in the pile of corpses and had made her way to safety, spreading word of the attack (as did the young Ortiz).

Instead of continuing on to Batopilas, the Indians passed the time in celebrating their easy victory with dancing, drinking captured *lechuguilla* (a *mezcal*-like booze which was made in Santa Inez), and roasting the meat of Vega cattle and goats.

For a radius of fifty miles around Santa Inez, the Mexicans either fled or hid out. Armed men gathered in Morelos and Batopilas and proceeded to Santa Inez. At the village of Cerro Prieto, downstream of Santa Inez, the Mexicans skirmished with the Indians and drove them back.

Somehow the Mexicans were able to surprise the bulk of the Indians at El Rincón, surrounding them from the heights above. A couple of crude bombs, made of dynamite and scrap metal tightly wrapped in rawhide, were lobbed down into the encampment of singing, dancing, feasting, drunken Indians by means of a big sling. The explosions signaled the start of the Mexican attack, and the Indians were shot down by the hundreds. Local lore holds that the stream was red as far down as to Colimas. Many of the Indians escaped through breaks in the cordon, and for days merciless patrols hunted them down. None of the dead Indians are reputed to have come back to life.

### Aftermath

Through the Mexican Government's *ejido* system (a type of farming cooperative), the Tarahumaras are protected against further seizures of their

land. Nevertheless, the Indian is still commonly regarded with scorn and contempt by most Mexicans. According to William Lewis Merrill in his doctoral dissertation entitled "The Concept of Soul Among the Rarámuri of Chihuahua, Mexico: A Study in World View," which was written at the University of Michigan in 1981, "the relations between the Rarámuri [that is, the Tarahumara] and their Mexican neighbors are amicable but superficial. Rarámuri and Mexican individuals may respect each other as persons and enjoy each other's company, but each group maintains an unfavorable stereotype of the other, which structures to a large degree their interactions. Mexicans view the Rarámuri as dirty, undisciplined, of inferior intelligence, and childlike, who in their poverty should be pitied. The Rarámuri consider the Mexicans to be immoral and unscrupulous people who attempt to seduce or rape Rarámuri women and to cheat the Rarámuri in economic transactions. For the Mexicans, the Rarámuri are uncivilized while they are civilized."

In 1958, the Tarahumaras gathered at Piedras Verdes; but soldiers, acting on information provided by an Indian, seized the cache of weapons which the Tarahumaras had hidden in a cave.

About five years ago, according to various mestizos whom I have interviewed, a Tarahumara *hechicero* called El Doctor attracted many Indians to his home near Huillachapa with claims that he could cure any illness and that anyone with implicit faith in him would never die. The Indians gave him their belongings, tilled his cornfields, and herded his stock without pay. Local Mexicans, remembering 1918, were on the verge of panic and considered killing the *hechicero*; but a Tarahumara named Bartolo Cleto, who once worked with El Doctor, assures me that El Doctor's power is fading and that things have quieted down. However, Mexicans in the area remain constantly alert to possible danger from the people they view as "uncivilized." ☆



*Password* announces with pleasure the recent publication of a book by former *Password* editor **Conrey Bryson**. Issued by the Deseret Book Company of Salt Lake City and entitled *Winter Quarters* (\$9.95), the book documents a sequence of little-known events experienced by Mormon pioneers while encamped at their "winter quarters" during their westward migration in the years 1846-1848. The product of thorough research, the book vividly tells of the suffering and hardships endured by these pioneers, some 600 of whom lost their lives at the Nebraska campground.



*Cristo Rey (Monument) by Urbici Soler. El Paso, 1939.  
(Photo courtesy Paul Dean Daniggelis)*



# THE SCULPTOR OF CRISTO REY

by Paul Dean Daniggelis

**O**VER THE PAST THIRTY-ODD YEARS SINCE Urbici Soler's death, both his monument on Cristo Rey Mountain and the man himself have suffered benign neglect. There are, however, significant rumblings that herald the renaissance of both man and stone. Robert Muñoz, General Manager of an El Paso television station, has become the latest, and most successful, in a long line of prospective restorers of the deteriorating statue. Okla McKee, Catholic diocesan archivist, and others have seen to it that Soler now has a stone to mark his gravesite. Retired Colonel James Ward and the Texas Historical Commission were instrumental in overseeing the placement of a historical marker at that same site.

There remains, however, an identity crisis. Only a handful of El Pasoans (artists, in the main, a few members of the academic community, and a student or two) recognized the masterful craftsmanship that went into Soler's sculpture. Tom Lea, for example, knew what Soler was about when Lea spoke of Soler as "an artist of genius and a craftsman of superb technical

*EDITOR'S NOTE: This article is a revision by Mr. Daniggelis of his piece entitled "Urbici Soler, Sculptor," which appeared in Southwestern Art, Volume IV, No. 3 (1974).*

knowledge and skill." For the rest, he was that funny little man with the foreign accent and habitual beret who had somehow managed to put that monument on the top of Mount Cristo Rey.

A brief review of Soler's life and work is offered here in an attempt to promote a fitting recognition of the neglected sculptor who gave the El Paso region a striking landmark.

Torn from the rugged Pyrenees of Spanish Catalonia, Soler was destined to master materials which he, in turn, wrenched from the earth. At the age of ten he was initiated into the cult called Art as an apprentice under Castellanas and the great Pedro Carbonell during the first decade of the twentieth century in revolutionary Barcelona. At the famed "Casa Lonja," Soler studied and absorbed the fiery tenets of the so-called "anarchists of art"—Picasso, Ainaud, Canyellas, and other rebels who initiated and perpetuated the movement against the rigid traditions and stifling incompetence of academic art.

Yet, when the exodus of artists and intellectuals for France began, the capricious young sculptor broke with his contemporaries. He sought out the classical master, Adolph von Hildebrand, not in Paris, but in the austere regions of Bavarian Munich. From 1913 to 1918, Soler received a rigorous, highly disciplined training under Professor Erwin Kurz, protégé of Hildebrand and his successor at the Akademie. Soler made frequent visits to Hildebrand's studio, absorbing the wisdom of the aging patriarch's lifelong devotion to "form." He could not, however, ignore the pulsations of his Catalonian heritage, nor the turbulent movements about him. Soler took Hildebrand's expressionless model of anatomical perfection—and breathed life into it. Years later Soler would write:

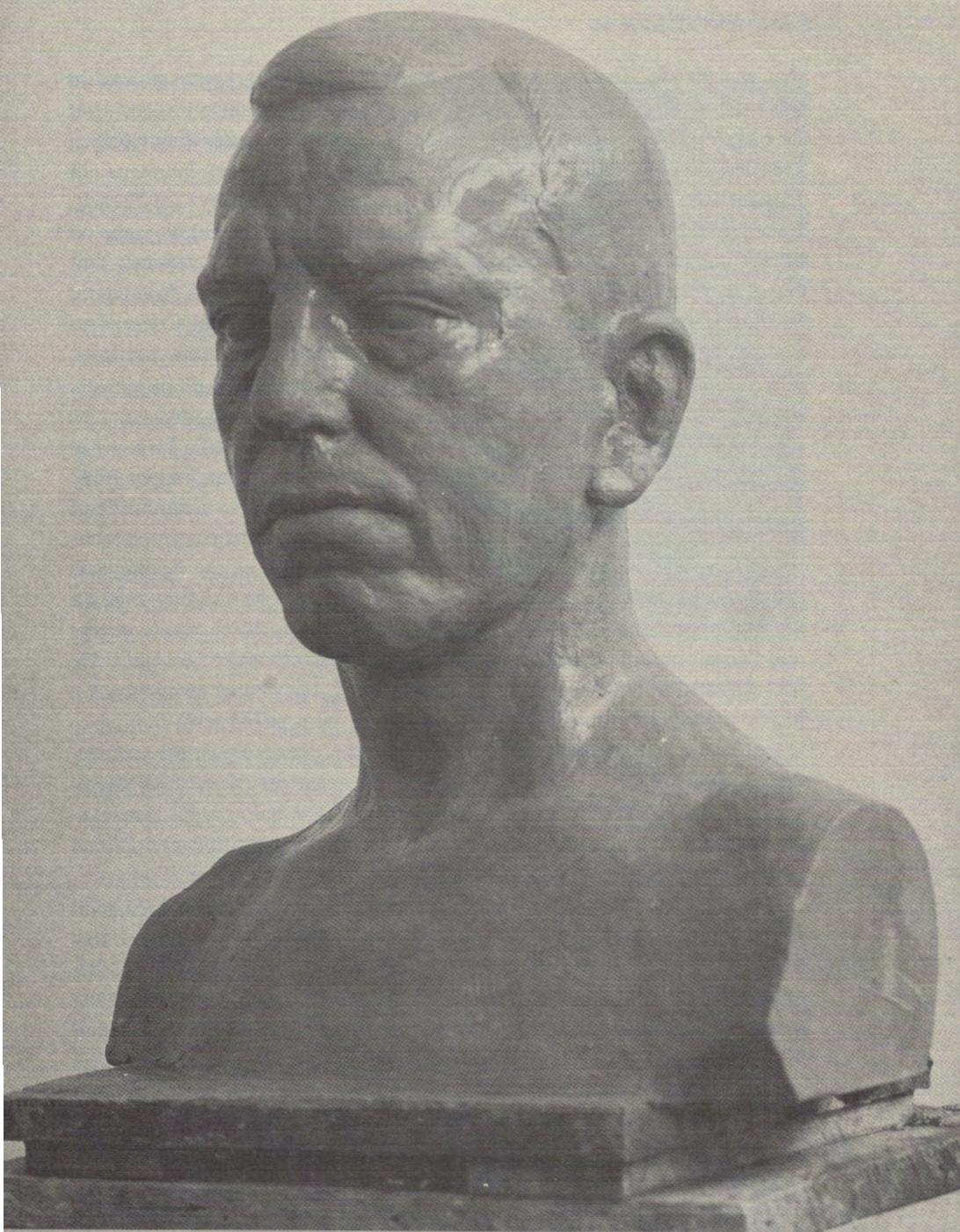
He who can reproduce a face,—or any other form in minute detail, is not a sculptor. He who can transform an object by exalting its characteristics in order to transmit to others what his trained eye sees, and the spiritual struggle evoked in his mind as a result of the creative effort, is the only one that may properly be called an artist.

The "spiritual struggle" induced by the "creative effort" is evident not only in Soler's works, but also in his very life. His creative urge forced his return to the values of his youth, values that seemed abandoned in war-torn Europe. His struggle became the focus of an inordinate search for the "heroic" in the etched faces of his models.

Even before Soler left the Akademie, he sought the means by which he might pursue his search unhindered. What better way than to teach the thing

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**Paul Dean Daniggelis**, a New Yorker by birth and an El Pasoan since 1963, is employed by the El Paso Natural Gas Company. He has authored a book-length biography (as yet unpublished) of Urbici Soler.



*Tom Lea by Urbici Soler. El Paso, 1946.*  
*(Photo courtesy Paul Dean Daniggelis)*

that was his life. The synthesis of many of his ideas on art were realized in this experience, giving him the added advantage of expressing in words what he was already master of with his hands. He acquired a better than working knowledge of German ("At that time, it sounds, the German language not human!" he later confessed) and also—as the years went by—of French, Italian, and English. Occasionally he was called upon to present his views on art for publication. His persuasion was, in the final analysis, classical. This classical approach to art, with its associated limits and restraints, is apparent in all of his best works, including, of course, his monumental *Cristo Rey*.

Soler returned to Spain in 1920 and did building decoration, portraits, and monuments in Barcelona, in Madrid, and in remote northern regions. After five difficult years he had won a considerable reputation—and he threw it to the wind. On a lark, Soler accepted the invitation of a former student to decorate public buildings in Buenos Aires, Argentina, in late 1925.

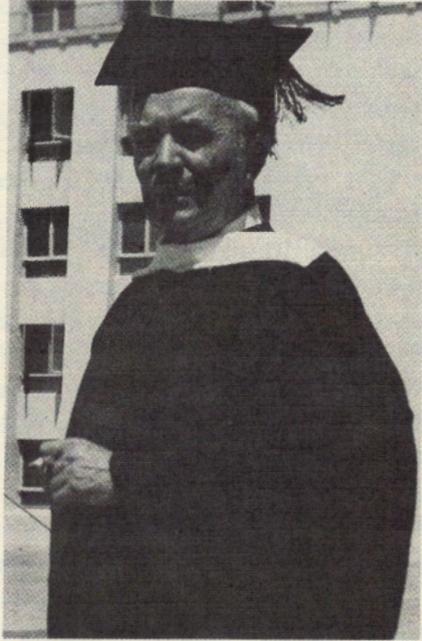
The short-term contract in the city of the pampas led to a multitude of commissions. Soler got rich! In five more years he built up a prosperous statuary enterprise, all the while complaining bitterly about the materialistic decadence of the New World. One day he realized that he had forgotten his high purpose, his earlier determination to seek models which would enable him "to transmit to others" his ideals of human worth and "heroism." He was ashamed to return to Europe empty-handed. He wanted to take back a plastic message of America that would restore faith in himself.

Ironically, he found his models not among the aristocracy of his acquaintances, who might be expected to offer the examples of superior moral strength, but in the rain forests of nearby Chile. The indomitable Araucanian Indians personified a kind of nobility and fierce pride that exemplified what Soler most valued and what he had abandoned in Buenos Aires.

Hailed as the "discoverer of the Araucos" in 1930, the peripatetic artist relentlessly sought out other heroic examples for his collection. In Mexico from 1932 to 1937, there was a feast for his ravenous eye. Tarascans, Mex-tecs, Zapotecs, Mayans, and Aztecs became the objects of his extraordinary search. The results would inevitably be compared with the famous Races of Man collection of the late Malvina Hoffman.

Sandwiched between his jungle and mountain sojourns, Soler exhibited his growing collection of "monos" and taught at various universities throughout Mexico. Occasionally he would stray from his self-appointed task, only to return with renewed passion. He poured eight years into this effort before he was ready to return to his homeland in 1936. But it was too late. Spain was embroiled in Civil War. Barcelona was almost obliterated. What Soler could not yet know was that he would never see Spain again.

Depleted finances forced Soler to accept commissions he would rather have refused. Except, perhaps, for one. A large, monumental statue of Christ was planned for a mountain peak near El Paso, Texas. Visions of Landowski's *Corcovado Christ* in Rio de Janeiro and Mateo Alsono's famed *Cristo de los Andes* in Argentina flashed before his eyes. The opportunity of creating a comparable monument on the North American continent was irresistible.



*Professor Urbici Soler at Texas Western College, El Paso, c. 1951. (Photo courtesy Paul Dean Daniggelis)*

From late 1937 into 1940 the monument consumed an enormous amount of Soler's physical energy, but the spiritual toll may have been greater. Delays, confusion, conflicting goals and personalities, and, ultimately, diminished funds combined to limit in scope his total concept of the project. All of the architectural accessories which he had planned were abandoned. Aesthetic balance ("architectone," Soler called it) was lost. Bitter recriminations followed, to no avail.

Disenchanted, Soler moved on. New Orleans was a whistle-stop in 1940. Then he went to New York and flirted, not unsuccessfully but also not happily, with experimental approaches which were in vogue at the time. In 1943 he returned to South America, only to discover that the region no longer held the same fascination for him as in earlier years. Two ill-fated marriages, one in the United States, the other in Uruguay, left a permanent scar on his weary soul. He translated these torments into an unfinished, but still magnificent wood-carved Christ in agony, sometimes called *El Cristo Moreno*, which now graces the altar of one of El Paso's churches.

Enthusiasm peaked briefly with the prospect of new construction on his unfinished *Christ the King* in El Paso. He returned to the southwestern United States in 1944, with the added incentive of memorializing the name of his recently deceased mother. He soon discovered that a lack of funds would deny him the opportunity.

county officials decided that the old Renaissance-styled courthouse (which had been completed in 1886) was to be torn down and replaced with a new courthouse. Studies were made of other courthouses, and on June 7, 1915, Commissioners Court announced that the plans for the new courthouse at Dallas would be used as a guide for the El Paso courthouse.

On August 19, 1915, Henry Trost, of Trost and Trost, Architects, submitted plans, and they were accepted by Commissioners Court. The El Paso courthouse was to be six stories high, and it was to have a basement. The front was to be 250 feet, and the depth of the two wings, 120 feet each. The building was to face San Antonio Street, with one of its wings to face Kansas Street and the other, Campbell Street. In other words, the new courthouse was to be constructed in front of and along the sides of the old courthouse. After completion of the new building, the old courthouse would be razed. And a suggestion was made that this empty site, a sort of courtyard area, be used for the building of an (attached) auditorium, its entrance to face Overland Street. El Pasoans were delighted with the idea, and their hopes soared when they read in the *El Paso Herald* of May 4, 1915, that "A Municipal Auditorium project will be started Wednesday afternoon when Mayor Tom Lea will meet with the Chamber of Commerce directors to consider plans for the erection of a \$400,000 auditorium in the city where conventions, mass meetings and other public gatherings may be held. The auditorium project, together with the free bridge to Juarez, are two of the mayor's pet projects, and he is now working to make them realities."

But in the May 7, 1915, issue of the *Herald*, Mayor Lea was quoted as telling the Chamber of Commerce directors that "The city will not be able to join the county in financing an auditorium, to be built on the rear of the [new] courthouse. City finances would not stand the drain. However, the county will go ahead." And Mayor Lea also announced that Walter Kohlberg, pioneer El Pasoan, would outline plans for the \$400,000 building.

Then, on November 11, 1915, the *Herald* told its readers: "This week will see the final decision as to whether El Paso will have an adequate auditorium for the big conventions which are to be held here during the next year, as well as the many public gatherings planned by the city and individuals. If the banks composing the clearing house consent to take the scrip necessary to build the auditorium as an addition to the courthouse, it is probable the county commissioners will vote to erect it in the rear of the new courthouse building." An editorial which appeared in the *Herald* a few days later (on November 20) declared that "El Paso needs a great auditorium where big

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**Rosemary Fryer** is a native El Pasoan employed at Fort Bliss. Also active in civic organizations, she is a past president of the El Paso Writers' League and the Five Points Pilot Club.



*A view, as seen in 1916 from South Campbell Street near the intersection of Overland, of the new El Paso County Courthouse being constructed around the old courthouse. A company of the 23rd Infantry was camped along Campbell Street to provide security from vandalism and theft. (Photo from the M. G. McKinney collection)*

conventions and entertainment can be held, where concerts and large orchestras or bands can be enjoyed at a moderate price by a multitude, where auto shows and 'made-in-El Paso' shows can be accommodated, and large public receptions and dances in honor of distinguished visitors can be given. An outlay of public funds is the only possible way to obtain this investment. El Paso is now big enough to have a real auditorium and the new courthouse site would be the most practical plan."

On December 12, 1915, groundbreaking ceremonies for the new courthouse were held, James Clifford turning the first shovelful of dirt with a silver spade. In January, 1916, the foundation of the building was completed, and by February, the east wing was begun. When the last portion of the old courthouse was torn down in 1916, space was available for the new auditorium. Apparently the financial problems connected with the construction of the auditorium had been solved. The building plans went forward, and El Paso's grand new auditorium was completed in February, 1918. Sixty-five years later, on January 26, 1983, a *Herald-Post* journalist imaginatively pictured the scene:

Back when the...El Paso...newspapers were filled with stories of the Great War in Europe, El Paso opened the doors to a magnificent public entertainment hall. Liberty Hall, county owned and tucked into the same

city block as the County Courthouse, was a stunning place. It had an enormous wooden stage, red carpeting and portable seating, elegant for the times. It was a showcase and a place to be seen."

This new "entertainment hall" was formally opened with great ceremony and fanfare on the evening of April 17, 1918. Nine days earlier, on April 8, the *Herald* had announced that "The first public assembly in the big auditorium annex to the courthouse will be a patriotic gathering the evening of April 17, when Secretary of the Treasury, William G. McAdoo, will be the speaker." (McAdoo was the son-in-law of President Wilson.) A day or two earlier, the *Herald* told its readers that "Liberty Day, April 17, the day Secretary of the Treasury W. G. McAdoo will be the guest of this city, will be the biggest day of the year if plans formed by the Committee of the Liberty Loan Drive are carried out. The afternoon of the 17th will be declared a half holiday by decree of Mayor Charles Davis."

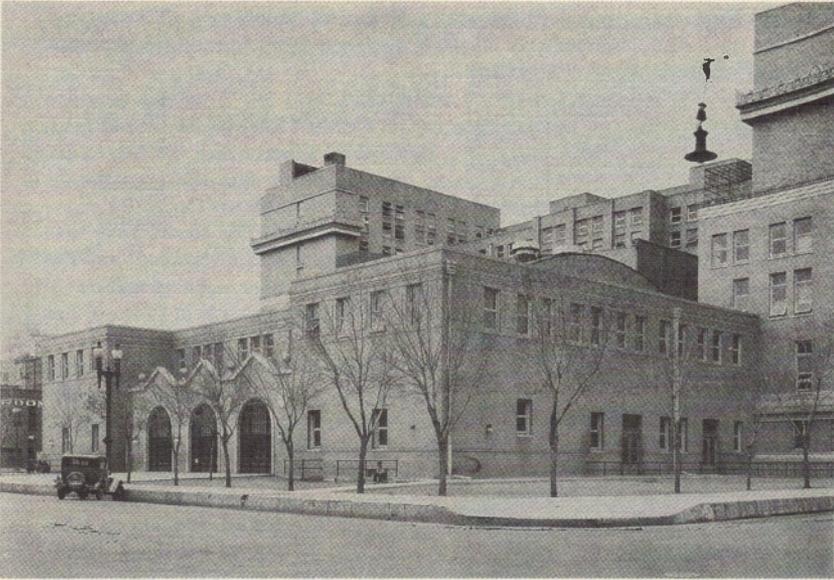
And it came to pass that on the night of April 17, 1918, Secretary William G. McAdoo gave a rousing speech on Liberty Bonds to a large crowd of El Pasoans at the new "auditorium annex." After his speech, suggestions for a name for the auditorium were asked for, and the suggestion from my father, William H. Fryer, to call it "Liberty Hall" was accepted.

For more than five decades after that gala Liberty Bond Rally, Liberty Hall was *the* place in El Paso for a great variety of public functions—grand opera, art exhibits, national conventions, wrestling matches, fashionable social events, school plays, and even a Shrine Circus. In November, 1919, the El Paso Symphony Orchestra gave its first concert there, and Liberty Hall remained the Orchestra home until the mid-1970s.

On Tuesday nights Liberty Hall held fights and wrestling matches, according to Mr. Lauro Barragan, retired El Paso businessman who at one time appeared as a wrestler under the name of Jack Miller; and he said the hall was always packed. My father and the late Jack McDonald also attended. They used to laugh when



*William Henry Fryer, El Paso attorney, who in 1918 suggested the name "Liberty Hall" for El Paso's new auditorium. (Photo courtesy Rosemary Fryer)*



*Liberty Hall, as it appeared a year or two after its opening in 1918. (Photo courtesy Southwest Collection, El Paso Public Library)*

they would see the wrestlers making a display of almost “killing” each other and then, after the bouts, meeting at the McCoy Hotel, where they shared a room.

Liberty Hall also provided the setting for performances by many famous visiting artists. In an unpublished Memoir entitled “Big Time Theatre Comes to El Paso,” the late Richard Amador, a former El Pasoan who had become an actor in Los Angeles wrote, in part:

Touring Musical Comedies played Liberty Hall—the back part of the County Court House....Some of the shows were: Al Jolson in *Bombo*, the Chicago Civic Grand Opera Company performing *Carmen* with Mary Garden and Jose Mojica. The San Carlo Grand Opera Company in a series of four operas, *Madame Butterfly*, *Rigoletto*, *Tosca*, and *La Traviata*. The Company also featured the dancers of the Pavlay-Onkorensy Ballet. (Starring in the ballet was Martha Esquivel, from El Paso, whose parents owned and operated Palmore College on Prospect Avenue. Martha’s brother, Sandy Esquivel, was the captain and quarterback of the El Paso High School’s football team, whose victories in many games gained them the Southwest championship title as well as rating the team among the top ten of National Players.)

Artists of international fame appearing in Liberty Hall were the incomparable Anna Pavlova, Ignace Paderewski (later Premier of Poland), Sergei Rachmaninoff, Fritz Kreisler, Madame Schumann-Heink, Mischa Elmen, Mary Wigman, Ruth St. Denis, and Ted Shawn. Walter Hampden in a magnificent production of Rostand’s celebrated play *Cyrano de Bergerac* with a cast of 75 players for a stay of six performances. For the production,

the stage was extended 10 feet with a 10-foot apron on both sides. Attending these performances were Hispanic audiences from Mexico—Chihuahua had a special train for the trip.

Mrs. G. Hallett Johnson for many years held her Thursday morning musicals in the Crystal Ballroom of the Cortez Hotel on Mesa and Mills Streets. Later she was impresario bringing to Liberty Hall the New York musical *Rose-Marie*, the Japanese dancer Michio Ito, German dancer Harold Kreutzberg, the Mexico City National Symphony Orchestra....

Other big-time musicals seen at Liberty Hall were *The Desert Song* with Perry Askam, the Gilbert and Sullivan light operas *H.M.S. Pinafore*, *The Mikado*, and *Pirates of Penzance*. The special Saturday morning matinee of the beloved opera *The Mikado* was held for school children in El Paso, Las Cruces, and Juarez....

Esperanza Iris, with the Havana Light Opera Company, was presented in the Spanish version of *The Merry Widow*. Billie Berrien, the Spanish teacher at El Paso High School, arranged for the students in all Spanish language classes in the schools and the College of Mines to attend this event.

Directed by Joel Friedkin, the young people of Temple Mt. Sinai on North Oregon Street had a three-night run of *Fair and Warmer*.

When pianist Paolo Gallico appeared at Liberty Hall, brought by Mrs. Hallett Johnson, he interrupted the formal recital to repeat part of a Beethoven Sonata for the audience, saying, "Isn't that lovely, right there? I'll play that part for you again." Eccentric? No. It was delightful!

As Richard Amador demonstrates in his Memoir, it is impossible to speak of the cultural events at Liberty Hall without extended reference to Mrs. Hallett Johnson. She was indeed an impresario whose contributions to the appreciation of music and the performing arts were enormous. And El Paso will never forget her dedicated service, which extended through decades. Just recently, on April 10, 1985, for example, Virginia Turner paid tribute to Mrs. Johnson in her *El Paso Herald-Post* column, which was based on an interview with Mrs. Johnson's granddaughter, Mrs. Jack Luscombe, Jr. Substantially concerned with Mrs. Johnson's organization of the El Paso Community Concerts series in 1930, the column is filled with historically-significant remarks by Mrs. Luscombe:

I recall Nelson Eddy—he was lovely to children—and Lawrence Tibbett, Helen Traubel, and Lily Pons. We had a great grand piano and they loved to practice on it. Lily Pons stayed at the Cortez Hotel. And I baby-sat her poodle.

My grandmother also set up places for artists to stay, and once when Marian Anderson was here, she was arranging for her room. The Cortez clerk said Anderson could stay there but would have to use a back elevator. My grandmother called Hotel Paso del Norte—Mary White (Zach White's daughter) was the owner then—and explained. Mary White said, "She won't be given a back seat here!"

From that time on, Grandmother booked the artists at the del Norte and moved her offices there.

My grandmother was determined El Paso would not be a cow town and that it would have culture....She'd lose money because the people didn't

respond for everything. I remember scant audiences, but my grandmother continued to work hard.

In the *Pro-Musica Magazine* of 1985-86, an excerpt from "First Stages" by retired El Paso businessman Hymer Elias Rosen traces the history of musical performances in the El Paso area. The author begins with the "musicians of Juan de Oñate," goes on to discuss other early musical activity in the region, speaks glowingly of the many performances at Liberty Hall, and concludes with this declaration: "...one can see that we are not a cultural desert but a desert culture in full bloom." Without doubt, one of the most talented and committed of those "horticulturists" who brought the El Paso desert to "full bloom" was Mrs. G. Hallett Johnson.\*



*Mrs. Guy Hallett Johnson, 1955. (Photo courtesy Hallett Mengel Luscombe)*

For all its importance as a center of entertainment and as an implement for the cultural enrichment of El Paso, Liberty Hall was constantly the object of criticism and the subject of dissatisfaction.

Not long after the Hall was built, its purpose and function were called into question. According to an *El Paso Herald* article of December 1, 1920, one L. M. Crawford, owner of the Crawford Theater (where plays and variety shows were presented), "threatened to bring an injunction against the county to prevent renting the Hall for purposes of amusement." It seems that the Orpheus Club of El Paso had rented Liberty Hall for a presentation by the San Carlos Opera Company and that Mr. Crawford believed this to be unfair competition. The same issue of the *Herald* also carried stories indicating a determination by El Pasoans that their Hall would be used as they wished, no matter whose financial toes got stepped on. One story was headlined "Rotary Club Endorses Hall for Opera Use." Another reported that "State Senator R. M. Dudley will, if necessary, introduce a bill to secure the enactment of a law providing that Liberty Hall may be used for

\*Editor's Note: MRS. GUY HALLETT JOHNSON was inducted posthumously into the El Paso County Historical Society HALL OF HONOR on November 2, 1986. The address delivered in tribute to Mrs. Johnson at the induction ceremony will appear in the Spring 1987 *Password*.

public entertainment.” And it went on to say that “County Judge McClintock and the Commissioners are emphatic in their stand to rent the hall for amusement purposes of the proper sort.” History tells us that it was the People, not Crawford, who emerged triumphant from that particular squabble about how Liberty Hall would be used.

But problems persisted nevertheless—especially problems deriving from the physical arrangements of the Hall.

The great variety of public functions which Liberty Hall accommodated provides the clue as to what was wrong with that “magnificent...showcase” which the people of El Paso County had managed to acquire with such difficulty and such resolve. In his *Pass of the North*, Volume II, C. L. Sonnichsen describes Liberty Hall as “a great barn of a place, not designed for anything in particular.” A necessary sort of building, to be sure, in those innocent and impecunious times. But one which soon revealed its limitations and its glaring faults.

Foremost among these, perhaps, was the problem of acoustics. It was not too serious a problem...maybe...to the spectators of a wrestling match or a circus. But imagine what those bare walls, those stretches of space, and those steel girders jutting through the balcony did to a production of *Tosca* or a rendition of Brahms. Throughout the 50-odd years of Liberty Hall’s monopoly on large public functions in El Paso, the newspapers repeatedly bruited complaints by disheartened patrons and outraged artists. County officials readily admitted the problem and just as readily promised to seek solutions. At one point, the steel girders were covered with acoustical material, and in the early 1950s there was a major renovation. Even so, according to Hymer Rosen, as reported by Virginia Turner in her *Herald-Post* column of November 12, 1984, the “acoustics were inferior in some areas where there were ‘dead spots.’ People would move from one place to another...so they would be able to hear better.”

As late as 1964—that is, 46 years after the Hall had opened—major studies were still being conducted in the ongoing effort to solve the problem of the unsatisfactory acoustics. On February 22 of that year, *The El Paso Times* reported that the “County Commissioners met this week with...Liberty Hall Director Wes Statton and with W. G. Reynolds, member of the Texas Western College Drama Department, to discuss acoustics...at Liberty Hall.” Then the article quotes Judge Glenn Woodard as saying, “We have received many theories as to what should be done, most of them conflicting.”

Its barn-like design produced other problems too—problems of ventilation, cooling, and heating. People were rarely comfortable in Liberty Hall,

no matter what kind of function was in progress. The article in *The El Paso Times* of February 22, 1964, headed "County Commissioners Study Drawbacks of Liberty Hall," addressed this obstinate problem, reflecting that even "early patrons often complained of chill, while the auditorium became oppressively warm as the auditorium filled." Describing the situation at a later time, the article reminded its readers that "Due to the noise from the cooling blowers, it often became necessary to wait until intermission to provide proper ventilation."

These difficulties to the contrary notwithstanding, Liberty Hall continued to be used until the early 1970s, when the theatre/auditorium of El Paso's new Civic Center was completed (a project which in its turn became, in the words of C. L. Sonnichsen in his *Pass of the North*, Volume II, "the biggest bag of worms ever"). But that's another story.

Since the opening of the Civic Center, Liberty Hall has been used for jury selection, and it was allowed to fall into a deplorable state of deterioration. The ceiling leaked and the walls were water-stained, the seats were broken and in sad array, the velvet curtain was torn, and the floor was filthy. A city official called it the most disgraceful place in El Paso. In February, 1985, a prospective juror, Mrs. Reeda Terry, was so appalled at the condition of Liberty Hall that she petitioned the appropriate officials to assign probationers to scrub and paint the Hall. She was successful in her efforts, and Liberty Hall, while not the "elegant" auditorium which it may have been in 1918, is at least not unsuitable as a meeting place for El Paso citizens who have been summoned to jury duty.

During the last several years, various proposals have been put forward as how to use, dispose of, or replace the historic building. The *El Paso Herald-Post* dated December 12, 1972, announced that "Liberty Hall may be converted...to make additional jail facilities." *The El Paso Times* of May 6, 1973, reported that "With the shortage of space in the City-County Building surrounding Liberty Hall, it is very likely that it will be converted into more office space and courtrooms." And on May 24, 1986, the *Herald-Post* told its readers: "a blue ribbon committee chaired by architect Louis Daeuble recommended that Liberty Hall be demolished to make room for a tower that could be expanded to meet the county's future needs."

Meanwhile, other cities across the United States have renovated and refurbished abandoned auditoriums like Liberty Hall, transforming them into thriving and popular theaters. Among the many El Pasoans who would endorse this action is Hymer Rosen, quoted in Virginia Turner's *Herald-Post* column of November 12, 1984, as saying that he would be saddened "to see...Liberty Hall go, as I believe it could be saved and...used again.

Her echoes have outlived the past, but will be remembered by those who saw and heard the entertainers of their times....”

Perhaps those echoes will reverberate to the El Paso voters. Perhaps the venerable old building will “speak” to them of its so significant role in the cultural development of El Paso. Perhaps, in spite of the tribulations caused by that “great barn of a place,” it will ultimately triumph in a due and honorable recognition: a much-used meetin’ hall provided by and for the People of El Paso County during that so troublesome time of World Wars and Great Depression in the twentieth century. ☆



## SOUTHWEST COOKERY OF OLD

Instead of an old-time recipe, your editor offers you in this issue a bit of housekeeping advice. It comes from a 19th-century cookbook which Nancy Hamilton, former *Password* editor, inherited from her grandmother Mrs. R. E. Miller of Pecos, Texas.

### Wash-Day

To do washing the easiest and best, it is conceded by all that the clothes should be put to soak over night. On Monday it takes all of the forenoon in most families to put things to rights and to get something cooked. Besides, it is not pleasant to change one’s dress (either mistress or girl) on Sunday evening and work at the soiled clothes for an hour. It either involves staying home from church, or working late after one does get home, to say nothing of the “Sabbath Day” view of it, or any unpleasant feature of the case.

There are many new soaps now manufactured that give excellent satisfaction, requiring no boiling of the clothes. To persons who use such, let me recommend to put the clothes to soak in a warm suds after dinner Monday. After supper, wring them through the wringer and put into clean suds.

On Tuesday morning the washing is a quick job, it being necessary only to rub lightly and rinse thoroughly.

Sprinkle and fold the clothes Tuesday evening, and iron Wednesday forenoon. If that does not finish, leave the rest for Thursday forenoon.

This gives time for the other housework, and saves one from that intensely tired feeling which is sure to follow a Monday’s washing and Tuesday’s ironing at all hazards.

So let “Blue Monday” be a thing of the past, and rejoice for the light that is given enabling the accomplishment of so-called household drudgery with comparative ease.



# OUR TOWN— ONE CENTURY AGO (October-December, 1886)

by Art Leibson

**E**L PASO WAS GOING THROUGH SOME EXTENSIVE growing pains as the year 1886 was drawing to a close and the full impact of the arrival of the railroads was being felt. The community vacillated between an urge for respectability and the enjoyment of the profits of sin. *The El Paso Times* conducted a constant crusade to improve the city physically, skirting the issue of gambling and prostitution. Its editorial wrath was strongest when uncovering some real or supposed indignities imposed on United States citizens arrested as lawbreakers across the river in Mexico.

The case of A. K. Cutting, whose arrest for libel and contempt of court in Paso del Norte brought threats of war, had just been quietly shelved when there was another arrest to provoke the righteous *Times*. One Tom Brown, a native of San Francisco but living in El Paso, had been arrested on this side of the Rio Grande by two Mexican officers on a charge of having stolen a shawl on Mexican ground. He was pistol-whipped and dragged across the border, in the presence of witnesses, to be jailed pending his trial.

That was enough to stir up renewed border animosity and a demand for protection from the United States Government. Whether he was guilty or not, the invasion brought an immediate call for action. The United States

Consul said he was collecting all the information he could to present to the State Department in Washington. The *Times* said the case was so aggravated that "it made the indignities inflicted on Cutting pale into insignificance." Brown was quietly released by Mexican authorities, to end the border flare-up, but he remained in El Paso to demand indemnification for his imprisonment.

The *Times* campaigned heavily and persistently, in editorial and news columns, for every Democratic candidate on the ballot in the upcoming November elections. The *Times* blatantly charged that both its competitors, the *Herald* and the *Tribune*, had offered their endorsements to local candidates on a cash-and-carry basis, citing evidence in support of the allegation of dirty politics. "If allowed to go unrebuked," the rampaging *Times* observed, "that sort of thing will ruin El Paso County both morally and financially."

The elections raised a problem locally on Commissioners Court. A man named Armendariz (the press was very negligent about providing first names in its reporting) had been elected to one of the seats on the court. He had been a tireless worker for the good of the community and was welcomed to the county's governing body. But there was one difficulty: Armendariz spoke not a word of English. It was decided to hire a translator who would interpret all the matters before the court, even though that meant long delays in the proceedings.

Mexico was caught red-handed in another major scandal. Residents of the Concordia area discovered one morning that more than 100 workers from across the river, equipped with shovels and scrapers, were busily trying to change the course of the Rio Grande. They hoped, by that change, to make a parcel of land lying on the United States side of the river part of Mexico. They were forced to retreat after being warned that their action could lead to some very serious complications.

With El Paso's burgeoning growth, it was freely predicted that when the next census was taken, in 1890, the city would show a population of at least 10,000. That figure was important in the city's expansion because, coupled with an annual post office business volume of more than \$10,000, it would mean free postal delivery for the first time. Indeed, it was hoped that free postal delivery might come even sooner if a bill then before Congress would pass. That bill would provide free delivery based on the volume of business alone, without regard to the population.

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Art Leibson, formerly the border correspondent for the *Time-Life* organization, is the author of this regular *Password* feature. Recently he was one of several El Paso attorneys honored by the El Paso County Bar Association for their 50-year (or longer) membership in the legal profession.

Another milestone along the path of growth was the selection of a site for the new Federal courthouse and office building. The land at the corner of St. Louis and Oregon Streets, one block away from the hub of downtown activity, El Paso and San Antonio Streets, was bought for \$30,000; and it was announced that construction would begin immediately.

With poll lists closed for the November 4 election, there were 2,500 registered voters in El Paso County, of which 1,400 resided in El Paso.

The White Oaks Railroad was then under construction, and there was a misplaced confidence that the work would be completed to bring a supply of cheap fuel to the border, all that was needed to assure the city's continuing vigorous growth. A group of businessmen, certain of that future fuel supply, began raising funds for the construction of a smelter to handle the extensive ore being produced in the Southwest.

Probably the area's biggest industry was the brick works, operating overtime to produce the type of brick that would hold up well in the desert sunshine. Looking for more workers to meet the growing demand, the factory listed its wage scale: A brick molder would receive \$4.00 day; Mexican boys could earn 40 to 75 cents a day; and adult Mexican laborers were offered \$1.25 a day. The factory was employing about 100 men and boys and was still unable to keep up with the demand for bricks from the local construction company.

For the first time in El Paso's history, the telegraph was used to intercept successfully a fleeing criminal and bring her back to El Paso to stand trial for her offense. The affair also brought considerable embarrassment to the Santa Fe Railroad and a threat of some unpleasant consequences.

A girl who had been working in Gypsy Davenport's mansion down on Utah Street had borrowed some rings from Gypsy for the evening. The next morning it was discovered that she had skipped out with the rings, also owing the madam for three hundred dollars' worth of clothes and other jewelry. The police quickly traced her to Fort Bliss, where it was learned that she had boarded a train for Las Vegas, New Mexico. Sending descriptions and details by telegraph, local authorities soon were informed that the girl had been arrested at her destination and would be held for El Paso officers who were quickly on their way to bring her back to the border. When her valuables were taken from her, it was found that she had been traveling on a pass issued by the general superintendent of the Santa Fe. The first report indicated that she was the superintendent's sister; but when it was later learned that he had no sisters, tongues began wagging. There were rumors that some very important railroad heads would roll.

The city was also expanding culturally with the announcement of plans

for a grand opera house to be built on West San Antonio Street. Also, a French restaurant had opened, opposite the old National Theater, offering its entrees at 50 cents each and providing take-out meals 24 hours a day.

Yes, growth was wildly in the air, capped by information that ever since the capture of Geronimo a peace treaty was in effect and that the Apaches had quieted down, rarely resorting to their troublesome raids. This was seen as a boon for the area mining and ranching industries and as encouragement for additional eastern capital to look toward El Paso.

Local news still rarely rated a front-page mention; but baseball, fast becoming the national game, did rate such attention. A world's championship game that year was between the St. Louis Browns and the Chicagos. They had not yet gotten around to calling it a world's series. Baseball also continued to grip the border, and the *Times*, responding to the heated interest, began printing box scores of all local games. ☆



## LEAD ME TO THAT GOLD MINE

In their book *How Come It's Called That?* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1958), Virginia Madison and Hallie Stillwell relate an interesting story about Reagan Canyon, which is located in the Big Bend Country. About 1884, when the Reagan brothers (John, Jim, Frank, and Lee) were ranching in the area, they sent one of their hired hands, a Seminole by the name of Bill Kelly, across the river into Mexico to hunt some horses. Bill didn't find the horses but he did find a chunk of gold. However, the "Reagans didn't believe Bill when he said he had found gold and cussed him out for not finding the horses." Shortly afterwards, Bill told the train conductor, one Lock Campbell, about the gold and even gave a few chips from the chunk to Campbell, who later had them assayed. The result of the assay was amazing—something like \$80,000 a ton. In the meantime, Bill Kelly ran away from the Reagans' ranch and disappeared. "Lock Campbell searched for the gold mine and he searched for Bill. The Reagans spent a fortune looking for the mine. Others joined in the search.... There has scarcely been a day since 1884 that someone has not been looking for that mine, but no one has stumbled across it yet. Big Benders often wonder what effect it would have had on the region had Lee Reagan said to Bill Kelly back in 1884, 'Damn the horses. Lead me to that gold mine!' instead of 'Damn your gold. I sent you to hunt horses!'" ☆



# FORT DAVIS, TEXAS

## *Key Defense Post on the San Antonio-El Paso Road*

*by Mary L. Williams*

**O**N SEPTEMBER 8, 1961, PRESIDENT JOHN F. Kennedy signed into law the bill "authorizing the establishment of a national historic site at Fort Davis, Jeff Davis County, Texas."<sup>1</sup> This year marks the twenty-fifth anniversary of the enactment of Public Law 87-213 which provided that the military post at Fort Davis "shall be set aside as a public national memorial to commemorate the historic role played by such fort in the opening of the West."<sup>2</sup> In the past quarter of a century approximately two million visitors have walked among the restored quarters and stabilized ruins of the once active and well garrisoned post. Today Fort Davis National Historic Site is the best surviving example of an Indian Wars period military fort in the Southwest.

Located on the eastern slopes of a rugged chain of mountains, Fort Davis was established in 1854 as a key post on the San Antonio-El Paso Road. With the discovery of gold in California and the ending of the Mexican War in 1848, westward expansion to the Pacific was assured. In order to avoid the severe winter storms and rugged terrain of the more northern routes,

thousands of emigrants, and later mail carriers and freighters, pushed their way west over southern trails. The San Antonio-El Paso Road was an important segment of the most southern of these traveled routes.

Unfortunately, the El Paso Road intersected Indian trails that led southward into Mexico. Apache and Commanche warriors for decades had raided the isolated villages and ranches of northern Mexico and southwestern Texas. The Indians soon came in conflict with travelers on the El Paso Road. By 1854 military authorities found it necessary to provide protection on the road and thus established a series of forts stretching six hundred miles across central and western Texas.

In October, 1854, Brigadier General Persifer F. Smith, commanding the Department of Texas, personally selected the site for the new post. Smith named the post Fort Davis after the then Secretary of War Jefferson Davis. Subsequently, the mountains surrounding the post became known as the Davis Mountains, and the town which grew adjacent to the post became known as Fort Davis.

Construction of the new post commenced immediately. Six companies of the 8th United States Infantry under Lieutenant Colonel Washington Seawell were ordered to build and garrison the post. By 1856, six stone barracks, a number of officers quarters, a bakery, magazine, guardhouse, hospital, and quartermaster and commissary warehouses had been constructed.

Throughout the 1850s Indian attacks on stagecoaches and wagon trains continued, and troops from Fort Davis were kept in constant pursuit. Yet despite increased Indian assaults, the San Antonio-El Paso Road remained a principal thoroughfare of western migration. The army, faced with the problem of expediently moving needed supplies to the frontier, sought better routes across the southwest deserts. In an attempt to develop new roads, Congress appropriated \$30,000 to conduct experiments using camels.

In the summer of 1857, camels arrived at Fort Davis, with an expedition on their way to survey a new wagon road across Arizona. Two years later, camels were used in seeking a shorter route from San Antonio to Fort Davis. During the summer of 1859, camels were selected to carry supplies between posts in west Texas. Although official reports attested to the superiority of the camel over the army mule for transporting goods across the barren regions of Texas, New Mexico and Arizona, the experiment was discontinued with the outbreak of the Civil War. The experiment did serve

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Mary L. Williams is a park ranger-historian with the National Park Service employed at Fort Davis National Historic Site. She is editor of *An Army Wife's Cookbook* (Globe, Arizona: Southwest Parks and Monuments Association, 1972), the recipes and household hints of Alice K. Grierson, wife of Colonel Benjamin H. Grierson, 10th United States Cavalry.



*Military Post of Fort Davis, Texas, at the peak of its development, c. 1886-1887. Fort Davis was abandoned in June of 1891. (Photo courtesy National Park Service, Fort Davis National Historic Site, Fort Davis, Texas)*

however to bring some diversity and at times humor into the rigors of army life at Fort Davis.<sup>3</sup>

Following the secession of Texas from the Union and the eruption of war between the North and the South, United States troops evacuated Fort Davis. By the summer of 1861, Fort Davis was re-garrisoned by Confederate troops whose job was to protect communication and supply lines for an invasion of New Mexico. However, with the defeat of Sibley's Brigade in northern New Mexico and a hasty retreat to *San Antonio*, *Fort Davis* was again evacuated. For the next five years, Fort Davis lay abandoned.

With the absence of troops, Indian raids steadily increased, and following the Civil War, the army again found it necessary to reactivate the posts along the San Antonio-El Paso Road. Troops led by Lieutenant Colonel Wesley Merritt arrived at Fort Davis in June of 1867, and work began on the construction of a new post. The troopers, former slaves and black volunteers who had fought for the North in the Civil War, were members of the newly formed Ninth United States Cavalry. The Ninth Cavalry was one of six regiments of black enlisted men authorized by Congress in 1866. The regiments were led by white officers, many of whom were also veterans of the Great War.

The troops of the second Fort Davis immediately took up the duty of protecting travelers and emigrants on the El Paso road. They regularly scouted

the area, escorted stage and mail coaches, and built roads and telegraph lines. They tracked the fleeing Indians, but rarely confronted them.

In September, 1879, the Apache Chief Victorio and a group of warriors began a series of attacks which encompassed the area west of Fort Davis. Using troops from several posts, Colonel Benjamin H. Grierson, commander of the District of the Pecos, enlisted aid from Fort Davis. After several hard-fought engagements, Victorio and his band retreated to Mexico, where in battle with Mexican troops the chief and many of his followers were killed.<sup>4</sup>

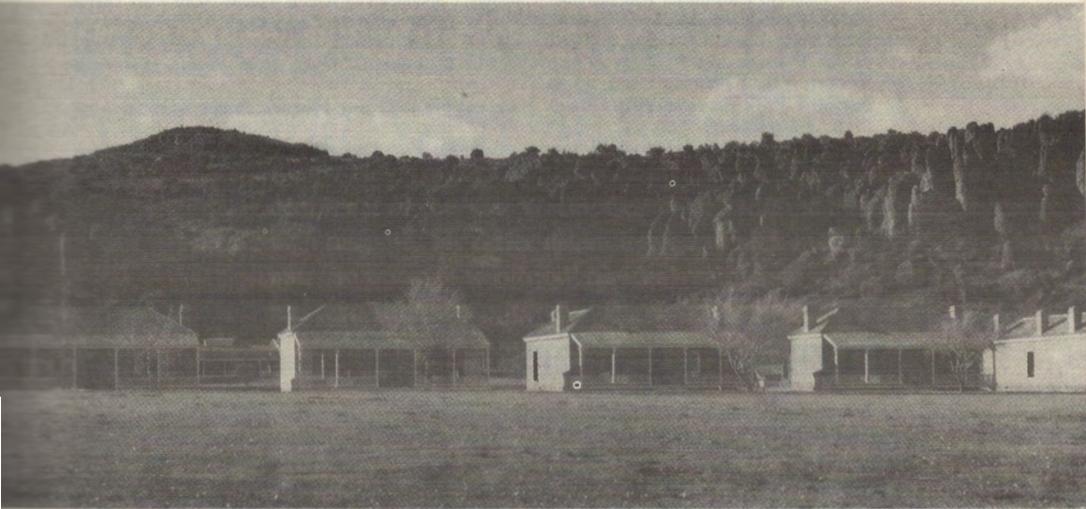
Following the Victorio Campaign, life at Fort Davis settled into a quiet routine. The soldiers were kept busy drilling on the parade ground, building and repairing quarters, patrolling the area from the Big Bend to the Guadalupe, and performing maintenance on roads and telegraph lines. However, the military usefulness of Fort Davis had come to an end. Westward growth and the railroad bypassed the fort. West Texas was no longer disturbed by raiding Apaches or Comanches. Uneventfully in June of 1891 all remaining troops left the post, and the property was entrusted to civilians.

In its thirty-seven years of active military service, the post of Fort Davis helped open a segment of the Southwest to peaceful travel and settlement. The post served as home for the first black regulars of the United States Army. In fact, black troops served exclusively at the post from 1867 to 1881 and then with white enlisted men of the First and Sixteenth Infantries from 1881 to 1885. The fort encouraged the development of the Trans-Pecos and the introduction of the cattle industry to the area. Its presence was vital to the growth of western Texas and to the success of the military defense system on the frontier.

Today Fort Davis is again a vital and commanding entity. Through a continuing restoration program begun by the National Park Service in 1963, more than twenty original structures have been saved. A visitor center, museum and audio-visual room are located in one of two restored enlisted men's barracks. The post hospital, the post commissary, and a lieutenant's quarters are open daily. Audio programs, slide show, and self-guiding tours of the grounds are among services provided year-round.

Summer seasons are highlighted by costumed employees and volunteer docents who staff and explain the commanding officer's quarters, an enlisted men's barracks, and an officer's kitchen and servant's quarters. Cavalry and infantry demonstrations and the firing of a replica artillery-piece on selected weekends are also part of summer activities. A picnic area and an extensive nature-trail system are located on site.

Fort Davis National Historic Site is currently in the process of restoring and refurbishing a squad room of an enlisted men's barracks to the summer of 1884 when Troop "H" of the 10th United States Cavalry occupied the quarters. When completed, the barracks will be the first in the National Park Service to depict the life style of black enlisted men in the Indian Wars Army. Funds for the barracks restoration and refurbishing work have come from the private sector. Thanks to the Friends of Fort Davis National Historic Site, a non-profit corporation organized in 1983, more than \$100,000 has been raised to date for the project. Within 20% of its goal, the Friends group hopes to announce the formal dedication and opening of the quarters within the next year.



*View of the restored officers' quarters at Fort Davis National Historic Site. (Photo courtesy National Park Service, Fort Davis National Site, Fort Davis, Texas)*

Fort Davis National Historic Site has come a long way in its first twenty-five years. Under the guidance of the National Park Service, and with continued support from private-sector groups like the Friends of Fort Davis National Historic Site, the pattern for future historic preservation projects, educational and cultural programs, and additional research and planning has been established. A "Historic Scene Management Plan" is currently being followed to restore the site to its late nineteenth-century appearance,<sup>5</sup> and a recently approved "Historic Resource Study" for the area will serve to guide the direction of future resource projects.<sup>6</sup>

Fort Davis National Historic Site is a unique combination of restored quarters and haunting ruins. It is a place where history is felt and observed. To take a glimpse into life at Fort Davis as it was at a frontier military post is

a rare opportunity and an unforgettable experience.<sup>7</sup>

Additional information on Fort Davis National Historic Site or the work of the Friends of Fort Davis may be obtained from the Superintendent, Fort Davis National Historic Site, P.O. Box 1456, Fort Davis, Texas 79734. ☆

#### NOTES

1. U.S. Department of the Interior, *Laws Relating to the National Park Service, Supplement II, May 1944 to January 1963* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1963), 346.
2. *Ibid.*
3. For more information on the Camel Experiment see Odie B. Faulk, *The U.S. Camel Corps: An Army Experiment* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976); Lewis Burt Lesley (ed.) *Uncle Sam's Camels; the Journal of May Humphreys Stacey Supplemented by the Report of Edward Fitzgerald Beale (1857-1858)*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1929); Eva Jolene Boyd, "The Great Camel Experiment," *Texas Highways*, January 1982., 42-47.
4. The Victorio Campaign was the major Indian Campaign in which troops from Fort Davis were involved. See John M. Carroll (ed.) *The Black Military Experience in the American West* (New York: Liveright, 1971); Douglas C. McChristian, "Grierson's Fight at Tinaja de las Palmas: An Episode in the Victorio Campaign," *Red River Valley Historical Review*, VII, 1 (Winter 1982), 45-63.
5. National Park Service, "Fort Davis National Historic Site Historic Scene Management Plan," November, 1983.
6. Jerome A. Greene, "Historic Resource Study for Fort Davis National Historic Site," (to date unpublished study, National Park Service, 1986).
7. The best published source for information on the military post of Fort Davis is Robert M. Utley's *Fort Davis National Historic Site, Texas* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1965) National Park Service Handbook Series No. 38.

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## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

October 8, 1986

Thank you for Sandra Hoover's article entitled "Mission Landscaping" in the fall issue of *Password*. Her ideas speak to something that is much needed....

Possibly you...know other people...who find the subject of mission plantings to be of sufficient interest to act upon Mrs. Hoover's ideas.... Perhaps there is a council of garden clubs or a civic group that might take on such a task. As a historian himself, Dr. Haskell Monroe might get one of his graduate students to write a thesis to research and document Spanish colonial or mission Indian agronomy....

As more information on El Paso's mission plantings occurs, please keep your readership informed.... El Paso's missions are older and more significant than San Antonio's, and I encourage you to help them assume their rightful eminence as Texas landmarks by continuing to educate your public in behalf of their urgent preservation.

Robert L. Washington  
San Antonio Botanical Center Society, Inc.  
555 Funston Place  
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# A BLACKSMITH FORGES A CHURCH

## *The Early Years of El Paso's First Christian Church*

*by Frances Marchbanks St. Clair*

*AUTHOR'S FOREWORD: In large part, the following article is taken from my longer paper which details the history of El Paso's First Christian Church from 1885 to 1985 and which was written at the request of the Texas Historical Commission. Most of the facts presented in this first section of the longer work were obtained from Vanita Sizemore's "El Paso's First Christian Church and Its Builders," a thesis written in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts from Texas Western College (now The University of Texas at El Paso) in 1960. I also gratefully acknowledge my liberal use of the references cited in Mrs. Sizemore's thesis.*

**T**HROUGHOUT THE YEAR 1985, THE FIRST Christian Church of El Paso commemorated its Centennial Year in a series of celebrations. One of the most joyful of these celebrations took place on November 24, when the Church formally accepted and dedicated the Texas Historical Marker which designates the Church as a State Historical Congregation. The ceremony coincided with the Thanksgiving Season, a particularly appropriate time, it was felt, to celebrate the Church's recognition as a landmark in the history of the State and also to honor the Church's founder and other early leaders.

In 1880 the frontier outpost of El Paso, Texas, consisted of a few adobe structures and a population of about 200 residents.<sup>1</sup> By 1885, the town had a population of 5,500 and it had become a center which served five railroads.<sup>2</sup> It was typical of southwestern towns of the time, being infested with saloons and gambling halls. It offered few enticements to godly folk as a place to settle and rear their families.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, into that setting in 1883 came a blacksmith by trade, with his wife and five children. That blacksmith was Philip Miner, who came to the Southwest, as did so many others, for his health.<sup>4</sup>

Philip Miner had been born in Pennsylvania on March 5, 1825. As a youth he became a resident of Indiana, where he married Elizabeth J. Lichtyler, a native of Tennessee. In 1849 the couple moved to Dallas, Texas, where they found a settlement of three log cabins. His adventurous and pioneering spirit led him, with his family, for the next thirty years to other Texas communities—Denton, Georgetown, and Austin. On August 12, 1865, he was appointed Justice of the Peace in Williamson County, Texas. He served as a blacksmith in each of the settlements where he lived, and he also taught the inhabitants about religion and a Christian way of life. He was a close student of the Bible, as well as of science and medicine, and he was convinced of the supreme importance of education. Consequently, he was active in the movement to establish public schools, as well as churches, throughout Texas.<sup>5</sup>



*Philip Miner (1825-1901), founder of the First Christian Church of El Paso. (Photo courtesy First Christian Church of El Paso)*

When Philip Miner settled in El Paso in 1883, his course followed the pattern of the past. He toiled at the forge early and late earning a livelihood for his family, and during his spare time he taught the gospel to a few disciples

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**Frances Marchbanks St. Clair**, a daughter of a pioneer family of El Paso's Lower Valley, holds degrees from The University of Texas at Austin and at El Paso. She was employed for several years in Austin as Secretary to the Board for Lease of University Lands and later, after her return to her native El Paso region in 1960, as a teacher at Coronado High School. She has been an active member of El Paso's First Christian Church since 1964.

who gathered around him. In the beginning there were six or eight persons who regularly met with him to worship, and that became the unit around which grew the congregation of the present First Christian Church of El Paso. In 1885 the little group, with thirteen consecrated Christians, became an organized congregation. They arranged to meet in a small adobe building located at the intersection of Stanton and First Streets. Then, for a period of time they conducted services in the District Court Room. Later they worshipped in a building on Campbell Street which also furnished quarters for the post office. Still later they met for services in a paint shop on Stanton Street. From the beginning, this small congregation followed in the leadership of Philip Miner, who refused to accept compensation for his preaching.

During the spring of 1890 a minister named Francis Brunner emigrated to El Paso because of his health and stayed for about one year. He became the Church's first salaried pastor at \$50 per month.<sup>6</sup> During his pastorate, worship services were held in a building located in the 400 block of Mesa Street.<sup>7</sup> After he left El Paso in 1891, the congregation returned to the paint shop for worship services and to the leadership of layman Philip Miner.

In the summer of 1895, the Reverend J. C. Mason, a well known minister from Houston, traveled to El Paso for a short vacation to test the climate for his wife's health. Upon arriving in El Paso, he was met at the railway station by a committee from Philip Miner's congregation, who invited him to preach during his stay. He graciously accepted the invitation and promptly demonstrated his skills in organization and leadership. He was shocked by the group's meeting place and advised them to buy a lot in the center of town. He maintained that they would always be few in number if they continued to hold services in a place such as a paint shop. He made a personal pledge of \$1,000, and he then appealed to a prominent El Paso attorney to start a subscription list for funds. The Reverend Mr. Mason took the list around town and within a matter of days he had raised the \$2,000 needed to purchase the lot at 107 Myrtle Avenue. By the end of his four-month vacation in El Paso, pledges in the amount of \$4,000 had been made toward the construction of a small building at the back of the lot. This building would be used for the time being as the chapel. Later, when funds would permit the construction of a church building on the front of the lot, it was planned that this small building would be sold.<sup>8</sup>

Through the Reverend Mason's influence, the Reverend S. K. Hallam accepted the El Paso pastorate. Soon after his arrival, the Christian organization moved into its first permanent home and took its established place in the heart of the city under the name of the Myrtle Avenue Christian Church<sup>9</sup> on the site where now stands the Paul Kayser Building erected by the El Paso

Natural Gas Company. The Reverend Hallam was succeeded by the Reverend G. H. Morrison and then by the Reverend R. D. Schultz, who remained head of the Church until April, 1901.<sup>10</sup>

By 1900 El Paso had become a thriving little city with a population of 15,906.<sup>11</sup> It was bustling with activity and important enterprises. Law and order had become something of a reality. The Myrtle Avenue Christian Church was firmly established with the members facing the new century confidently. On May 3, 1901, just a short month after the departure of the Reverend Mr. Schultz, the Reverend James Milton Campbell arrived to fill the pulpit. He was a prominent preacher in the state, having been trained by the eminent Texas Disciple.<sup>12</sup>

On July 18, 1901, the congregation was saddened to hear of the death that day of their founder, Philip Miner, who had given of himself so unselfishly in the service of the Church and his fellow men. He died in El Paso at the home of his daughter, Mrs. Emma Cross.<sup>13</sup> Eighty-four years later, during the Centennial Celebration Year, the First Christian Church of El Paso expressed its ongoing gratitude for the work of Philip Miner in the solemn Philip Miner Headstone Dedication service held at Concordia Cemetery. The ceremony included a procession from the Church, now located on Arizona Street, to the cemetery in antique cars provided by Mr. and Mrs. Albert Unger.

By the spring of 1903, the Church Board had made definite plans to erect a new downtown building large enough to accommodate the increasing membership, which now totaled 250.<sup>14</sup> In that same spring, Dr. Edward McShain Waits, especially qualified as an organizer and Christian leader, arrived in El Paso to fill the pulpit.<sup>15</sup> He directed the church members into immediate action, and necessary arrangements were made for the construction of a new church building on the corner of Oregon and Franklin Streets. The lots cost \$9,000, the building was to cost \$15,000, and the Myrtle Avenue property was sold for \$18,000.<sup>16</sup> The ground was broken in January, 1904, and the cornerstone of the Church's new building was laid with appropriate ceremonies on March 4, 1904.<sup>17</sup> Services were continued in the Myrtle Avenue building until July, 1904, when the first service was held in part of the new building on Oregon Street.<sup>18</sup> It was not until February 13, 1905, that "El Paso's newest and finest church" was completed.<sup>19</sup> A large and beautiful window framing the life-size form of Christ was placed in the vestibule and dedicated in memory of Philip Miner.<sup>20</sup>

In 1952, when the First Christian Church moved into its present building on Arizona Street,<sup>21</sup> that window was placed in the vestibule where it stood framed and lighted until 1985, when it was given a focal location in the new

Memorial Foyer, an addition to the church which constituted a main event of the Centennial Celebration Year. Also featured in the Memorial Foyer is a large photograph of Philip Miner, the blacksmith who forged El Paso's First Christian Church and lovingly shaped an implement of faith and confidence strong enough to till the inhospitable soil of a riotous frontier community. ☆

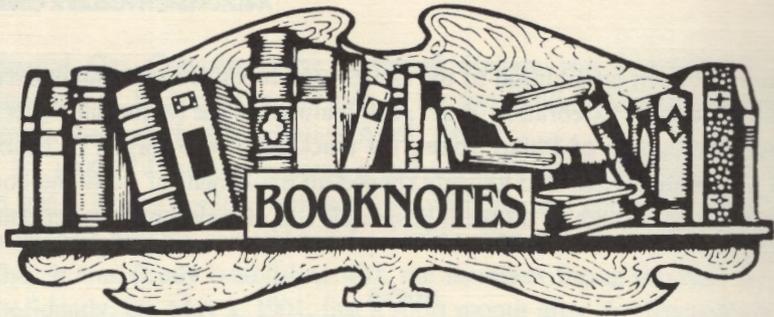
## NOTES

1. Owen White, *Out of the Desert* (El Paso: McMath Publishers, 1923), 161.
2. *El Paso Herald-Post*, April 28, 1956.
3. Dr. Howard Thompson, "Makers of El Paso" (unpublished thesis in the El Paso Public Library, university not specified), 69.
4. Mrs. H. E. Stevenson, Scrapbook (unpublished), described by Vanita Sizemore in her master's thesis, "El Paso's First Christian Church and its Builders" (Texas Western College, 1960) as being in the possession of Mrs. H. L. Stevens, 1613 N. Stevens St., El Paso, Texas.
5. Irvin N. Cross, letter of November 25, 1959, described by Vanita Sizemore, *op. cit.*, as being in the possession of Mrs. H. L. Stevens, 1613 N. Stevens St., El Paso, Texas. (Miss Cross was the granddaughter of Philip Miner.)
6. Mrs. H. E. Stevenson, Scrapbook.
7. S. K. Hallam, letter of April 12, 1928, described by Vanita Sizemore, *op. cit.*, as being in the possession of Mrs. H. L. Stevens, 1613 N. Stevens St., El Paso, Texas.
8. Bertha Mason Fuller, "Jacob Caswell McCoy Mason" (unpublished master's thesis, Brite College of the Bible, Texas Christian University, Fort Worth, Texas, 1953), 131-134.
9. Mrs. H. E. Stevenson, Scrapbook.
10. George Wauchope, "Memoirs" (unpublished), described by Vanita Sizemore, *op. cit.*, as being in the possession of Mrs. H. L. Stevens, 1613 N. Stevens St., El Paso, Texas.
11. *Statistic Abstract of the United States for 1957*, 78th Annual Edition (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1957).
12. *El Paso Daily Herald*, May 4, 1901.
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14. Louis J. Downey, El Paso, Texas, Interview conducted by Vanita Sizemore on September 25, 1959, as cited in her thesis, *op. cit.* (Mr. Downey became affiliated with the First Christian Church of El Paso in 1905 as a very young man.)
15. Mrs. H. D. Ashley, Interview conducted by Vanita Sizemore on October 15, 1959, as cited in her thesis, *op. cit.* (Mrs. Ashley became a member of the First Christian Church of El Paso in 1904.)
16. Mrs. H. E. Stevenson, Scrapbook.
17. *Ibid.*
18. *El Paso Daily Herald*, July 25, 1904.
19. *Ibid.*, February 13, 1905.
20. Mary Jackson (now Mrs. Ralph H. Hellums, El Paso, Texas), "Early History of the First Christian Church in El Paso, 1885-1907" (unpublished paper). (Mrs. Hellums' father was a longtime and active member of El Paso's First Christian Church.)
21. *First Christian News*, February 24, 1952.

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The United States 17th Cavalry Regiment was constituted on July 1, 1916, and organized at Fort Bliss, Texas. It was deactivated in 1921 at Presidio of Monterey, California.

—from *Crossed Sabers Newsletter*, March 1, 1985



**FURNITURE FROM THE HISPANIC SOUTHWEST, edited by William Wroth.  
Santa Fe: Ancient City Press, \$7.95**

During the 1920s and 1930s, New Mexico enjoyed a revival of interest in the crafts of Spanish Colonial times, including the making of furniture distinctive to the area. Several recent books are devoted to this style of furniture, and it is only natural that Dr. William Wroth, formerly chief curator of the Taylor Museum of the Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center, should hit upon the idea of reviving a 1930s series of bulletins that give instructions for building this type of furniture. The bulletins were originally issued by the State Department of Vocational Education for a training program directed by Brice H. Sewell.

Dr. Wroth's purpose in making them available is not limited to producing another "how-to" book; he wants both craftsmen and buyers of furniture to "know some of the important points about authentic old examples." Included are measurements and details of the large cabinets known as trasteros, benches, tables, chairs, shelf brackets, wall cupboards, beds, doors, chests, and a trunk rack. The final section is devoted to modern adaptations of authentic Spanish Colonial pieces, many of them illustrated from museum collections. Wroth's previous contributions to this field include *Hispanic Crafts of the Southwest* and *Christian Images in Hispanic New Mexico*. Now living in Bloomington, Indiana, he is at work on a second book about New Mexico santos and further volumes for the Ancient City Press' traditional crafts series.

NANCY HAMILTON

Associate Editor, Texas Western Press

**ARMS, INDIANS, AND THE MISMANAGEMENT OF NEW MEXICO  
by Donaciano Vigil, 1846, edited and translated by David J. Weber.  
El Paso: Texas Western Press, \$5.00**

The Southwestern Studies Series has a new look. Instead of the familiar cover format which has served the Series issues since Texas Western Press began the distinguished line in 1963, each volume now will have its own distinctive cover design, one which complements the subject matter presented.

Here, in No. 77 of the Series, the subject matter is presented in two essays written in 1846 by Donaciano Vigil, a prominent New Mexico resident of the times and in an Introduction by the editor, David J. Weber. The documents, which appear in the original Spanish and also in an English translation by the editor, were penned as

proposals—pleas, if you will—addressed to the New Mexico Assembly in an attempt to influence policy changes respecting the frontier situation. Vigil's hope was that the Assembly would call on officials in Mexico City to take immediate action concerning the Indian problems which had been directly or indirectly created by the central government's actions related to Anglo-American merchants, traders, and trappers. Vigil makes clear that the government's unwise regulations and tariffs had actually enabled these Americans to gain control of Indian power through commercial intercourse with the tribes, especially dealing with weapons, ammunition and supplies.

In his Introduction, editor Weber, who is an authority on Southwest American history, provides a biographical sketch of Vigil and also a commentary on the historical value of Vigil's two documents (which appear here for the first time in their entirety). According to Weber, these documents are rare examples of an intelligent New Mexico native son accurately analyzing the "Mismanagement of New Mexico" and eloquently expressing in the written language of that time how the central government could improve conditions on that frontier.

J. MORGAN BROADDUS

Department of History

The University of Texas at El Paso

**HISTORY OF MARFA AND PRESIDIO COUNTY by Cecilia Thompson.**

**Marfa, Texas: Presidio County Historical Commission, \$60**

To my knowledge this is the first history of Presidio County ever published. Covering the years 1535-1946, it appears in a boxed, two-volume set complete with index, photographs, maps, and notes.

The story begins with Indians, moves swiftly to the Spanish entradas of the 16th century, and by page 47 records the coming of the first Anglo-Americans. The remainder of Volume One's 392 pages outlines the settlement, military occupation, Civil War, and growing pains prior to 1900. Volume Two (633 pages) details the years of border upheaval, depression, prosperity, and World War II.

It is in this second volume that Thompson makes her greatest historical contribution. Very little is known about the effects of the Great Depression and World War II upon our lives today, and the author lays out a pattern that is meaningful and easy to follow. Furthermore, she is particularly effective in treating the impact of the Mexican Revolution on the area. She describes sympathetically and vividly the plight of Mexican refugees fleeing the fire and blood of Pancho Villa. She affords us a clear view of the some 2,000 men, women, and children who fled across the Rio Grande to Presidio during early 1914, threw themselves on the mercy of the United States army, and were marched to Marfa where they caught a train and were interred in El Paso as "prisoners of war," our government knowing not what else to do.

A collector of West Texas and border history will not want to overlook this outstanding work of regional history.

LEON C. METZ

Member, Western Writers of America

**STALWARTS SOUTH OF THE BORDER** edited by Nelle Spilsbury Hatch and B. Carmon Hardy. Fullerton, California: Shumway Family History Services, \$35

A highly significant chapter in the history of the El Paso Southwest concerns the Mormon colonies established in Chihuahua, Mexico, in the 1800s. From these colonies came the foundation of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in El Paso and other settlements in New Mexico and Arizona. The interaction of these colonies with various factions in the Mexican Revolution which began in 1910 forms some vivid pages in the history of Mexico.

In the 1960s, Nelle Spilsbury Hatch, a lifetime resident of the colonies and author of a previous book on the history of the area, began the monumental task of compiling biographies on the people who have lived there. Mrs. Hatch died before her work was finished, and Professor B. Carmon Hardy, of California State University at Fullerton, completed the work. Professor Gary Shumway, also of Fullerton State, made extensive contributions in the preparation and printing of the book.

There are more than 160 separate biographies in the book, and a comprehensive index lists hundreds of other names that were important in the individual narratives. Names treated in the volume that are well known in El Paso business, civic, and religious life include Pratt, Cardon, Romney, Wilson, Taylor, Pierce, Turley, Gonzalez, Hatch, Jackson, Bentley, Whetten, Skousen, and many others. The book is available locally from Mrs. Madelyn Hatch Knudson (a daughter of the co-author), 10124 Buckwood, El Paso 79925.

CONREY BRYSON  
El Paso

**ALEX SWEET'S TEXAS—THE LIGHTER SIDE OF LONE STAR HISTORY** edited by Virginia Eisenhour. Austin: University of Texas Press, \$9.95/\$19.95

Paseños who would happily vote tomorrow to secede from Texas and join up with New Mexico will probably not think too much of Alexander Edwin Sweet's "Texas," for it never looks west of San Antonio. In fact, when Sweet refers to *West Texas* it is the Alamo City he has in mind.

However, given these limitations, Sweet (1841-1901) presents a vivid, and very funny, picture of Texas in the latter 19th century. The reader is inevitably reminded of some of Sweet's contemporaries: Bill Nye, Artemus Ward, Orpheus C. Kerr, Petroleum V. Nasby, *et al.* For your reviewer's taste, Sweet is better than any of them, with as sharp a wit and less "slapstick."

Sweet's columns were a feature of the *Galveston Daily News* from the late 70s through the early 80s. He wrote primarily of Austin, San Antonio, and Galveston. The present editor has sorted this collection of his writings into five categories, which give some idea of the range of his topics: The State [of Texas], Cities [specifically the three cited above plus Houston], People, Life [i.e., culture], and Natural Resources [mainly fauna, but with a glance also at *chile con carne*].

As history, the book's value derives from some memorably sharp pictures of a bygone society. (The editor has done excellent service in adding explanations of obscure references.) Perhaps more importantly, simply as reading it is good fun.

RAY PAST  
Professor Emeritus of Linguistics  
The University of Texas at El Paso

**TEXAS MUSEUMS: A GUIDEBOOK** by Paula Eyrich Tyler and Ron Tyler.  
**Austin: University of Texas Press, \$16.95/\$8.95**

There is a big slice of Texas in this introduction to the museums of the Lone Star state. Altogether, it lists over 540 museums which exhibit art, history, natural history, science and technology, or archaeology.

The arrangement is alphabetical by city or town. In the Trans-Pecos region, museums are located at Guadalupe Mountains National Park, Big Bend National Park, Iraan, Sheffield, Fort Stockton, Pecos, Lajitas, Alpine, Presidio, Marfa, Fort Davis, Van Horn, Sierra Blanca, and El Paso, the latter being blanketed rather thoroughly with 18 listings. The strengths of each museum, the hours of operation, and admission charges, if any, are described.

Throughout the state, there are some interesting names for museums. For example, the SPJST Museum at Temple exhibits items brought from Czechoslovakia to Texas. The initials stand for Slavonic Benevolent Order of the State of Texas. Then there are the Silent Wings Museum at Terrell (gliders), the Audie L. Murphy Gun Museum at Hillsboro, the National Cowgirl Hall of Fame at Hereford, and the Old Jail Foundation at Albany. The listings contain many curiosities.

Even the index has a fascination, as artifacts on specific topics such as trains, clocks, Indians, and osteopathic medicine can be located at a glance. Enid Justin (bootmaker) is listed alongside Scott Joplin (composer).

Just as significant as any of the listings is the history of the development of museums in the state. From 1879, when the first museum opened at Sam Houston Normal Institute in Huntsville, the museum complex has developed into its dynamic place of leadership among states as far as museums are concerned.

**JAMES M. DAY**

Director, El Paso Centennial Museum

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**T**exans have witnessed a variety of holiday traditions throughout the state's history, some of which were established as long as four centuries ago. According to researchers at The University of Texas Institute of Texan Cultures in San Antonio, Indian tribes near what is now El Paso were introduced to the religious pageantry of the [Christmas] holiday as early as 1599 when the ladies and noblemen attached to Juan Oñate's expedition enacted the march of the Wise Men to Bethlehem. Dedicated padres, who accompanied early Spanish military expeditions, used the miracle play "Los Pastores" as an aid in teaching Christianity.

Another Spanish tradition dating back to the 16th century, which is still practiced today, is "Fiesta de las Luminarias," or Festival of Lights. The soft sparkle of candles is symbolic of the lighting of the way for Mary and Joseph as they traveled to Bethlehem. "Fiesta de las Luminarias" is celebrated each year along the banks of the Paseo del Rio, or River Walk, in San Antonio, and on El Paso's Scenic Drive, where the glittering lights cast a peaceful glow upon the base of the mountains.

—from "Dashing Through the Lore of Texas Christmas Past" by Charlene Blohm (released by the Department of News and Information of The University of Texas Institute of Texan Cultures at San Antonio).

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