

# PASSWORD



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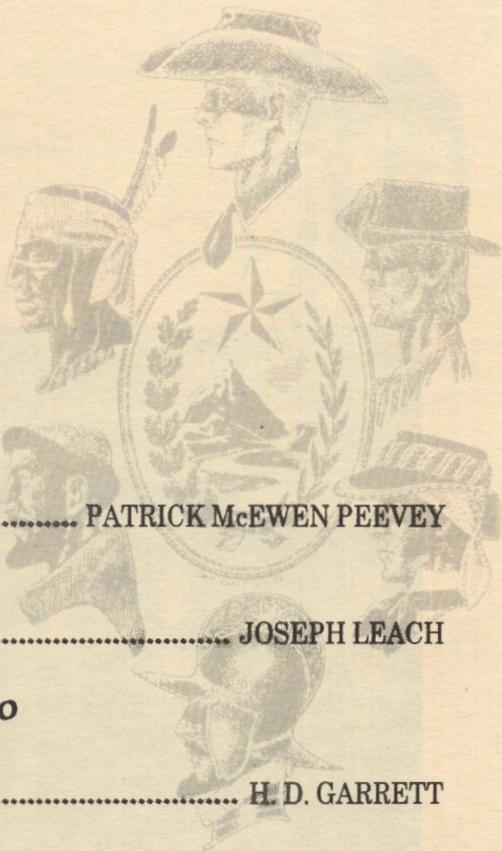
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## From the Brite Ranch to the Bright Lights

By Patrick McEwen Peevey

**C**hristmas is traditionally a time when families come together to celebrate, but can you imagine a Christmas reunion interrupted with the yell "To arms, to arms!"? Such was the case on Christmas Day in 1917, in Marfa, Texas, when my grandmother's father, grandfather, and uncles were called from their dinner to ride out to the Brite Ranch which was under attack by Mexican bandits. It is stories like this that make talking with my grandmother, Lorena Shannon Peevey, so interesting and entertaining.

Born on January 27, 1916, in Marfa, Texas, my grandmother was the second of four children born to James and Johnnie Shannon. Until the age of six, she lived on the Shannon Ranch, north of Ruidosa, Texas. Like most children born in West Texas at that time, she could ride before she could walk, and her life was most definitely different from anything I have experienced.

My grandmother, as well as her siblings, have shared wonderful memories with me, memories that have made me very appreciative of the modern conveniences I have grown up with. On the Shannon Ranch there was no indoor plumbing, running water, central heat, or air conditioning. There was, instead, an outhouse, a spring, a wood stove, and windows! Electricity was not reliable, so once the sun set, kerosene lamps were the only source of light. Soap was made on the ranch, and it did not contain skin softeners or deodorants, but it did clean. Wash-day was all day, and it involved the use of a large wooden oar to turn the clothes in the big black cauldrons that were placed over open fires. Her family

was actually considered "modern" because they had a portable wringer and did not have to wring clothes by hand.

When it was time for my grandmother to start school, she moved to Marfa. She attended Marfa schools until her graduation. Marfa Elementary School was four rooms and each room had a teacher. Elementary school was grades 1-7, and high school started after the seventh grade. In elementary school, emphasis was placed on reading, writing, and arithmetic, and until high school there was no physical education. Not everyone went on to high school, and at the time my grandmother attended Marfa High School, the student enrollment was only 222. Because the enrollment was so small, students participated in every extra-curricular activity available. My grandmother played on the varsity basketball team because there were not enough boys to field a team. She was tall and she could play! Everyone went home for lunch as there was no cafeteria. My grandmother was only sixteen when she graduated from high school, and after two years at Sul Ross was a certified teacher. Later she completed her Bachelor of Arts at The University of California at Los Angeles. My grandmother pointed-out that as ideal as the Marfa schools sounded, they were not integrated. Minority students, Mexicans and Negroes, had to attend the Blackwell School where there were, at times, one hundred students in a class.

Having lived all my life in El Paso, hearing my grandmother tell me about "the good old days" is quite something. My grandmother began coming to El Paso to spend her summers when she was seven. She would stay with her aunt, Mrs. Del Richey, in her home at 1301 Madeline Avenue. The trip from Marfa was made in an Overland, an open touring car, and would take all day over dirt roads. El Paso, in those days, started at Five Points and ended at Kern Place. There was a streetcar that ran from Kern Place to downtown where one could shop at the Popular Department Store or the White House, or they could watch a movie at the Plaza Theater. A string of small markets and Piggly Wiggly provided meats and produce, and milk was delivered to the front door. There were a few restaurants, but most people prepared and ate their meals at home, and no one had every heard of "fast food." The best place in town for ice cream was a small ice cream parlor in Five Points. My grandmother can remember that at the time there were two hospitals, Hotel Dieu, which was run by an order of

Catholic nuns, and Masonic Hospital. To keep busy, my grandmother would read, play jacks, roller skate, listen to the radio, and paint.

As you can imagine from these stories, my life and the community of El Paso are far different from that of my grandmother. Today I not only have classes that stress the basics, but I am able to learn social studies, science, speech, computers, and physical education. My school is integrated, and I can count among my friends students from all races and creeds. I have indoor plumbing, running water, central heating, and, thankfully, air conditioning. I can buy whatever I need in large stores such as Albertson's and know it will stay fresh and crisp. When I travel to Marfa, it is over well-paved highways and takes three hours. El Paso does not begin and end at Five Points and Kern Place, but extends in all directions for many, many miles. Like my grandmother, I like to read, listen to music, and skate; however inline skates are not roller skates!

My grandmother, who just celebrated her eightieth birthday, retired from teaching in 1979. There is, however, nothing "retired" about her lifestyle. She travels, paints, works part time at the Gallery in Sunland Park Mall, and, of course, keeps me entertained with wonderful tales and anecdotes of growing up in the Wild West.

Just as I sit in amazement at her stories, I wonder if one day my grandchild will find stories of my childhood and memories of El Paso just as fascinating. It is in comparing her life to mine that I come to the realization that history is a living subject, and that, as I sit in awe listening to what was and thinking of what is, I find myself imagining what will be.

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**PATRICK McEWEN PEEVEY**, age thirteen, recently completed the eighth grade at Lincoln Middle School in El Paso. This essay earned first place in the 1996 Frank W. Gorman Memorial Historical Essay Contest sponsored by the Society. He is the son of Teresa L. and Joseph Peevey III.

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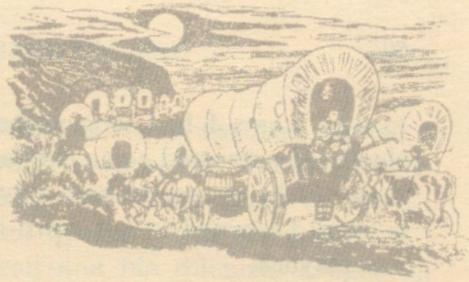
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# Let Down Your Bucket Where You Are

By Joseph Leach

**A**fter living in El Paso some years, I have discovered a new application for the old story about sailors adrift in a lifeboat two hundred miles off the coast of Brazil. When another ship at last hove into sight, those thirsty sailors thrust up their empty bucket. "Give us water!" they cried, "Give us fresh water!" On deck, the captain cupped his hands 'round his mouth and shouted, "Let down your bucket! Where you are!"

That captain knew something about the Amazon River that the sailors did not. At that distance from shore, the Amazon's current was still so strong that its fresh water had not yet mixed with the brine of the South Atlantic.

The story of those sailors and their bucket intrigues me now because it has helped me discover of late the worth of a bucket right here, in our sea of dry sand.

I had long wished that the local El Paso scene possessed some natural landmark like the yellow cliff in northern New Mexico where for centuries travelers etched-in their names. There on Inscription Rock the words dated 1605 are the most famous: *Pasó por aquí el adelantado don juo de onate del descubrymiento de la mar del sur a 16 de abril de 1605* (Passed by here on the 16th of April, 1605 the honorable governor Don Juan de Oñate from discovering the South Sea).

Like Oñate's inscription, most of the other names on that rock carry the date when each one of those travelers *pasó por aquí*. "Francisco M. De Silva 1629, Don Diego de Vargas 1692, Philipe Garsia, 1700, Andres Romero 1774, R.H. Kern 1849, A. Vanderwagen 1898" are typical.

As I say, I had long wished that here at the Pass of the North we possessed some similar roster, but I had not imagined that, nearby, we might hold a dynamic equivalent. Had not, that is, until I learned to "let down my bucket" in the sand dunes of Samalayuca.

Those Mexican dunes, a cluster of pink and gold hills, lie some thirty miles south of El Paso/Ciudad Juárez. Towering five hundred feet above the dry plains and covering seven hundred square miles, those *Medanos de Samalayuca* constantly shift as the high winds of March whirl and bluster among them. At other

*Those Mexican dunes, a cluster of pink and gold hills, lie some thirty miles south of El Paso / Ciudad Juárez.... But beautiful as they have been for centuries and beautiful as they are today, those dunes have never been friendly to travelers.*

times, especially at sunrise and sunset, they lie calm and inert like old gold and amethyst awaiting the skill of a jeweler.

But beautiful as they have been for centuries and beautiful as they are today, those dunes have never been friendly to travelers. Prehistoric peoples, nomadic Apaches, Spanish explorers, Franciscan missionaries and colonizers, platoons of marching armies, Mexican mule drovers trudging north with supplies for New Spain's northern frontier, American wagon-train merchants rolling south to markets in Zacatecas and Mexico City: all have faced formidable odds.

Among those many travelers, the more literate published their memoirs. Available now in the University of Texas at El Paso library, those vivid reports have long intrigued me, for they demonstrate the courage those travelers possessed, the risks and the pains they grimly endured.

That list began in 1598 when Spanish conquistador Don Juan de Oñate, his soldiers, and colonists came north to establish Spanish control over Indian lands that have become the state of Chihuahua; El Paso, Texas; and the state of New Mexico. In the shimmering heat of late April, they confronted the dunes of Samalayuca.

Struggling ahead of Oñate's main party, the scouts "suffered terribly from the burning sands, for our horses were scarcely able to drag their tired bodies along and pack our baggage, let alone

carry us." But after five days without water, the men sighted a shining ribbon of water some twenty miles north. Shouting feebly, they staggered to it, fell on their knees, and drank as though the whole Rio Grande could not quench "their terrible thirst." Days later, when Oñate himself and his colonists caught up with the scouts, they too thanked God for the blessed relief of cool water.<sup>1</sup>

During the next three centuries, as the trade route from Veracruz through Mexico City and El Paso to Santa Fe became one of Mexico's busiest highways, other travelers suffered similar trials.

In 1766, the Spanish explorer Nicolas Lafora found Los Medanos "very troublesome" for near their only spring, *El Ojo de Samalayuca*, the Apache Indians "are wont to surprise and kill passers-by."<sup>2</sup>

Seventy-three years later, in 1839, the American wagon-train merchant Josiah Gregg encountered many graves while crossing those "huge hillocks and ridges of pure sand," for in all directions, Apache marauders were laying waste the ranches and depre-dating "at will."<sup>3</sup>

In November, 1841, George W. Kendall was among a group of Americans who were prisoners of the Mexican army. They were trudging southward toward Mexico City when that "dreary Sahara" blocked their progress. To drag their heavy wagons past those sandy "pyramids which raised their heads high in air," they were forced to double their teams. In the loose sand, the horses sank to their fetlocks and the exhausted men could only crawl along on their bellies.<sup>4</sup>

Five years later in August, 1846, the German scientist Adolph Wislizeny noted that the "much dreaded sand hills" of Samalayuca resembled "the Arabian desert transplanted into the plain." During the night, thunderbolts illuminated many "tired travellers stretched out on the sand" and "our wagons moving as slow and solemn as a funeral procession." Alongside the wagons came "ghostly riders on horseback" and others on foot "tracing the road with the fire of their cigarritos."<sup>5</sup>

Later that year, the English soldier-of-fortune George Ruxton found many dead oxen and horses and mules among those "extra-ordinary mountains of loose shifting sand." Out of one ridge protruded the upper half of a human skeleton.<sup>6</sup>

Confronting "that dreadful desert" during the Mexican War in 1847, Colonel Alexander Doniphan and his 1000 American soldiers were conducting a wagon train to Chihuahua when their mule teams sank to their knees in the sand. To keep the train moving, the teamsters jumped down and pushed the wagons along with their shoulders, and the soldiers—their tongues swollen dry and their animals dying of thirst—discarded four tons of flour to lighten their loads.<sup>7</sup>

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John Russell Bartlett and his wagon train had at least as rough a time in crossing *Los Medanos* in 1852. At every fifty feet it was necessary "to stop and let the tired animals breathe and get a moment's rest." Then the air resounded again with "the screams of the men and the lashing of the whips. But with all the hard swearing and beating, the poor jaded animals often stalled and "could not start the wagons an inch." Even when the teams were doubled, the mules refused to go further. Holding their noses to the ground, they "patiently bore the beating of their cruel drivers."<sup>8</sup>

Twenty-seven years later, in 1879, Chicago journalist John Finerty came north to research Mexico's economic potential for some Chicago investors. On the southern edge of *Los Medanos*, villagers warned his stage-coach driver not to take the "badlands" road through the dunes: among them just yesterday Apaches had massacred seven persons.

Proceeding mostly at night, when Finerty at last came in sight of El Paso in April, he discerned through his telescope the United States Army's Fort Bliss and the banner waving atop its flagpole. "There is the flag of your country," remarked a Mexican traveler. "Yes," Finerty answered, "and I fail to remember when I have beheld it with greater satisfaction."<sup>9</sup>

Such recollections as these concerning the dunes of Samalayuca, I easily found at the University of Texas at El Paso. But trudging over the sand hills themselves, I listened carefully when good luck suggested that, if I wished to know more, I should

"let down my bucket."

Wandering at dawn and at dusk, I learned to scoop up the sand. And there in the palm of my hand, as vivid as if the ages could speak, I found another means of knowing the dunes' human past.

In one handful, I encountered painted potsherds, the work of some ancient potter. In another, a warrior's precisely chipped arrow heads. In another, fragments of a *metate* worn smooth by some Indian grinding her corn into meal. In still another, blue and green chips of Majolica pottery, the broken dishes no doubt of some Spanish housewife in the eighteenth century.

Since then I have found many items more recent: brass buttons, bullet casings, battered army canteens, harness buckles, rusty tin cans, twisted Coke bottle caps and the brown glass remains of somebody's recent beer party. I have also found bleaching white bones.

Late in the day, wading down a soft dune toward the hard graveled road where my car waits safe and unstuck, I have tried many times to note some distinction between the old and the new in my bucket. The ancient pieces, of course, are artifacts. Clearly, if they could speak, they could tell many things about the vanished people who used them. But what of the shiny new beer cans, the modern artifacts? What do they tell, or, more likely, what will they tell when future ages try to decide?

Slowly, I turn and slog again up the slope. At its top I toss, helter-skelter, all the things I have found and watch them settle back into the sand.

For up there, I have come to think of those slopes—forever changing their shapes while forever remaining intact—as an archive, a storehouse accepting the new while retaining the old till some later man, in his far distant day, may decide to "let down his bucket."

Before I climb into my car, I study the small white sliver of bone I still hold in my palm and feel it turn cold, the way the bones of the hand that holds it will cool and join it eventually—matter-of-factly—in time's old earthly process.

Pondering that, I search among the loose coins in my pocket, then hurl a 1996 quarter straight at my tracks down the slope.

The names of only a few of the thousands of travelers crossing *Los Medanos* have ever been found, but among them I rest content that the sand itself holds enduring proof of our passing.

Each of us travelers, each one in turn, *pasó por aquí*.

**DR. JOSEPH LEACH**, Professor Emeritus of English at The University of Texas at El Paso, is a charter member and a past president of The El Paso County Historical Society. His interests and writings embrace a wide range of subjects, among them the native cultures and lore of the American Southwest. He has published a biography of Sam D. Young, founder and first president of the El Paso National Bank (now Texas Commerce Bank), and has travelled widely throughout the world since his retirement.

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# Medical Care in El Paso During World War II, 1941-1945

By H. D. Garrett, M.D.

**D**uring World War II, the healthiest segment of the El Paso male population was serving in the Armed Forces, leaving behind those who for varied reasons were disqualified for military service. The problem of health care in El Paso thus was intensified by the relative increase in the less-healthy segment of the populace, plus the marked reduction in the number of trained medical personnel available.

Local hospitals, both charity and private, were forced to compensate for decreases in personnel by extending the hours of work and by enforcing rigid reductions in unnecessary surgery. No one received face lifts or breast reconstructions during World War II in any local hospital. Many persons inexperienced in any sort of medical procedure were pressed into service, and those who trained these raw recruits displayed the ultimate in patience during the periods of their instruction.

In the war years El Paso's hospitals included: El Paso City-County Hospital (charity) on Alameda; Masonic in Five Points; St. Joseph's Sanatorium on Grandview; Southwestern General on Cotton; the original Hotel Dieu on Stanton; and the original Providence at Prospect and Santa Fe. The latter two were demolished after World War II; Hotel Dieu was rebuilt on the same site and Providence was moved to North Oregon Street. Because the sharp increase in the population of El Paso in the 1930's exceeded any planning that might have been done, there were never enough hospital beds available during the war years. Frequently, after



*Providence Hospital located in Sunset Heights, early 1900s. Photo courtesy collection of El Paso County Historical Society.*

1940, hospitalizing patients became a problem, and priorities had to be established by the hospitals.

Hotel Dieu Hospital had the contract to furnish beds for employees of the Southern Pacific Lines, thus insuring that space would be available for the workers in this essential industry. Private rooms were practically nonexistent; two or three beds were placed in what had been private rooms until well after the end of the war. El Paso remained "underbedded" until the mid-1950's.

Those of us who performed medical services at the charity hospital, El Paso City-County Hospital, witnessed a marked increase in demand for treatment in facilities that were already woefully inadequate. An epidemic of diphtheria in 1942 caused an overflow in the ward for contagious diseases, and, during the war years, the special hospital unit dedicated to the care of those with tuberculosis was never able to accommodate nearly the number of those affected and who should have been hospitalized.

Currently in hospitals almost any item which is utilized in the treatment of a patient is discarded after one use. In contrast, because of the shortage of supplies of all kinds in civilian hospitals during the war years, practically any device used in patient care was preserved for sterilization in order to be used again. As an example of such frugality, it was required that removable surgical blades be collected and resharpened, and surgeons became accustomed to working with scalpels that did not cut as keenly as they had in the past. Both before and since the war

years, surgical blades have been discarded after one use.

Although no wartime production facility such as an aircraft factory was located in El Paso, a function most vital to the conduct of the war was found here. El Paso is the hub of several railroad lines, and most importantly a transcontinental route from California to Houston. During the war years, the maintenance of the rail equipment and care of the personnel demanded prime consideration. The Southern Pacific and the Santa Fe railroads each maintained roundhouses in which men worked twenty-four hours a day repairing overworked engines and freight cars.

The number of people employed in this essential railroad industry increased sharply between 1941 and 1945, including many who were recruited despite physical limitations. Once again, the lack of available bodies was evident when many of those ill-suited for physical labor were called to serve in such positions. Many of those inadequately prepared became ill under the stress of wartime jobs, and as a consequence, there was more pressure on overloaded medical facilities and personnel. Those of us responsible for the maintenance of good health among workers considered that this was our prime wartime contribution.

The experience of all those in medical practice has established, beyond any doubt, the inevitable relationship between chronic fatigue and disease. The patterns of illness which occurred during the war years once again substantiated this direct connection. Civilians employed in almost every category worked more hours than their bodies were capable of enduring, emotionally as well as physically. As a direct result of this stress, an abnormal number of illnesses were observed. Railroad employees in particular had inadequate time for rest in this industry from which so much was demanded during wartime. However, most citizens forced themselves to function because they considered it their patriotic duty to do so.

During these years, pharmacists often had difficulty obtaining essential medications, and even compounds of less significance were often in short supply or were nonexistent. Naturally,

*Many of those inadequately prepared became ill under the stress of wartime jobs, and as a consequence, there was more pressure on overloaded medical facilities and personnel.*



*Masonic Hospital at Five Points, no date. Photo courtesy collection of El Paso County Historical Society.*

the needs of the military had priority, and everyone understood this. It was not until after 1945 that the remarkable technical advances in pharmaceuticals developed during the war years became available to the civilians. Every war has been the source of advancements of great magnitude in therapy, paradoxical as that may seem. Penicillin and improved sulfonamides were utilized where they were needed most—on military personnel—for maintaining the good health of the personnel and for the treatment of those wounded. Such a common item as rubbing alcohol often was unavailable in civilian pharmacies.

An advantage of living in El Paso between 1941 and 1945 was its proximity to a country not at war. Despite the rationing of certain foods in the United States, one could go across the river to Ciudad Juárez and obtain excellent food at quite reasonable prices. Moreover, Mexico seemed never to run out of alcoholic beverages, which added to the comfort of many of us. Since transportation difficulties kept tourists at a minimum, El Pasoans had, in essence, a monopoly on commerce with Juárez, and we did not hesitate to go to Juárez or to partake of the food there. Most civilians in El Paso suffered no deprivation of many of the articles which were not found in the interior of the United States during those war years.

A fair conclusion regarding the general mood of the citizenry of El Paso during the war years of 1941 to 1945 would be that the vast majority responded as did United States citizens everywhere—they did those things necessary to aid in the winning of the war. Despite seemingly major problems, which were really minor in comparison to being on the front lines of battle, very little complaining was heard. Actually, we citizens of the United States seem to complain more vehemently in peacetime than ever we did during the war years.

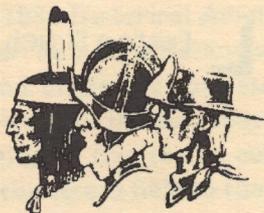
Although health care was not as readily available as many might have wished, basic care was accessible during the years of World War II. The sacrifices faced by the civilian population were minuscule when compared to the sacrifices made by sons, husbands, and fathers who fought in Europe and in the Pacific.

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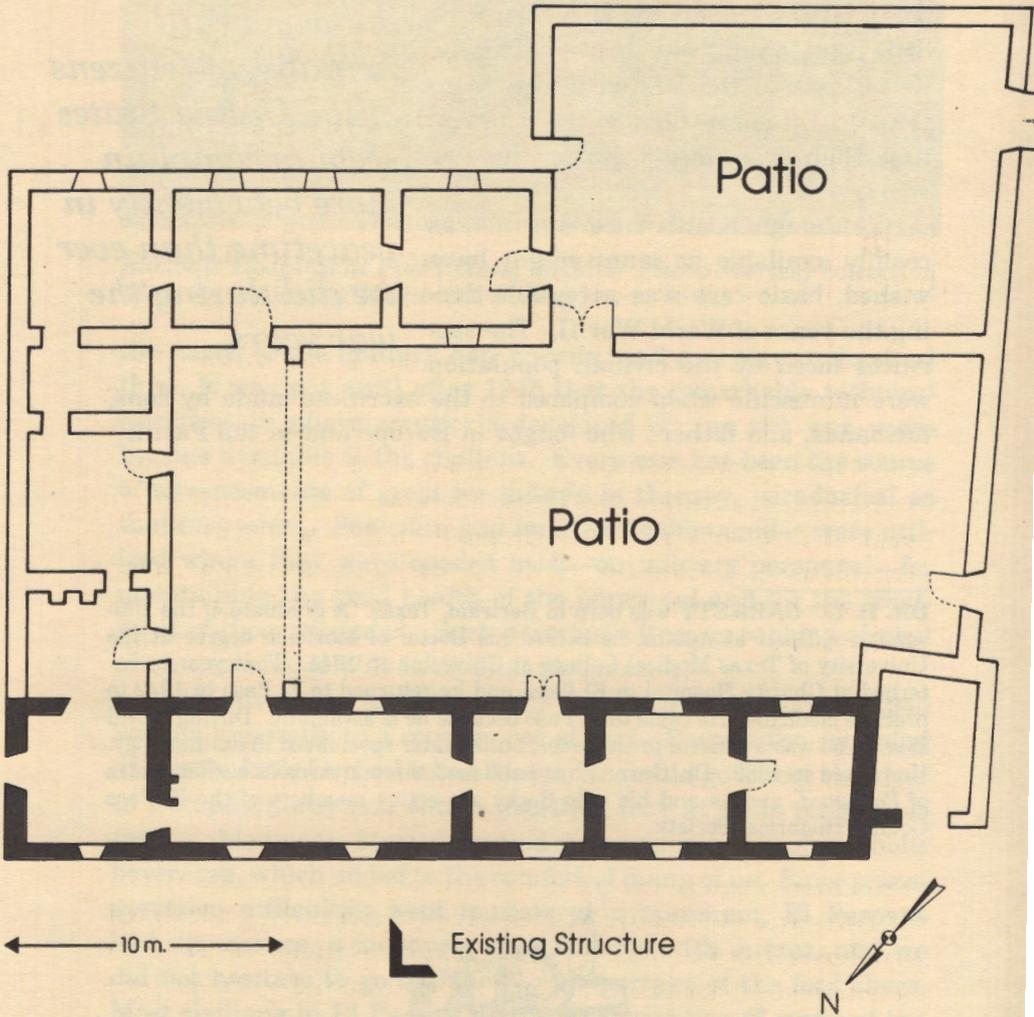
*Actually, we citizens of the United States seem to complain more vehemently in peacetime than ever we did during the war years.*

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# Casa Ronquillo





## Casa Ronquillo in San Elizario

By William W. "Bill" Lockhart

**N**estled on the edge of a corn field south of the church in San Elizario, Texas, lie the remains of a Spanish Colonial type dwelling built sometime in the first half of the nineteenth century. Its owners included at least one Presidio captain, two county sheriffs, and one county judge, and during the nineteenth century its ballroom entertained the most important people in the El Paso area. Although the structure withstood the ravages of Apaches prior to the 1880's, the invasion of Colonel Alexander Doniphan's forces during the Mexican War, and the turmoil of the Civil War in the area, it could not withstand the neglect of the twentieth century.

Casa Ronquillo, known locally as the Motor Inn, is located just southeast of the intersection of Alarcón Road and Convent Road, about two hundred meters (two hundred nineteen yards) south of the San Elizario village square. The remaining structure rests in the shade of cottonwood trees at a fork of the San Elizario lateral. A cotton field stretches out to the south of the remaining block of rooms which back up against the side lateral on the northeast. Since 1995 the old house has become a gang hangout and is covered with spray-painted territorial markings.

According to the 1980 Historical American Buildings Survey (HABS), the house was "an Adobe Estancia (country home) in the Mexican tradition" and originally consisted of "twelve or more rooms in three wings with an interior courtyard surrounded by a portal."<sup>1</sup> Only one wing of five rooms currently remains. The remaining wing faces the cotton field to the south, and the longest



*Top: A recent photograph shows the original viga and latia roof at Casa Ronquillo.*

*Inset: An interior shot of one of the remaining rooms covered with graffiti.*

*Photos courtesy Brian Gross, 1996.*



axis points east northeast. The original *viga* and *latia* roof remains, although in the largest room (ballroom), it has collapsed in spots, revealing the construction layers. The first layer of roof, the *vigas* (beams) are pine logs anchored into the adobe walls approximately ten feet above the floor. These are covered with *latias* (smaller branches) which came from "cut willows from the river piled across beams and stuck together with mud."<sup>2</sup> The *latias* are in turn covered with reeds.

A thick layer of adobe completes the construction. In some rooms, the *vigas* are concealed behind tongue-and-groove hard wood ceilings from a later era, although frames for the original canvas ceiling also remain in others. Thick wooden frames still remain in the twelve doorways. In addition to the external doorways, each room contains an entryway into the adjoining

chambers. The current structure has smooth cement floors that are an obvious later addition. The walls, both internal and external, have been plastered with cement and chicken wire, possibly in an attempt at preservation, although the cement plaster may have been added prior to 1930.<sup>3</sup> Many of the walls are pock-marked with the small and large excavation attempts of treasure hunters seeking the legendary riches that the house is rumored to contain.

C. L. Sonnichsen described Casa Ronquillo at the time it was occupied by Charles E. Ellis (1869-1877) as "a many-roomed adobe with two patios, a ballroom with painted walls and ceiling, and a little private chapel for the mistress."<sup>4</sup> The house was described by the *Herald* in 1930 as a "massive 12-room adobe house built around a luxurious patio. Its walls are three feet in thickness."<sup>5</sup> In 1944 the *Herald Post* noted that the "Walls of the building are 30 inches thick and the ceilings are 15 feet high."<sup>6</sup> Although the ceilings are lower today, the report may have been correct at that time. The cement floor was not then in place, and the area around the house may have been built up later as a means of flood control.

The house was remodeled sometime in the 1870's by Jesús Montes and other local carpenters. Montes (1842-1941) "used to tell that the lumber had been brought from Alamogordo and that they, the carpenters, had to hand-chisel the wood to make smooth doors and windows. The chisel marks are noticeable on close inspection."<sup>7</sup> Some of Montes' carpentry work holds together still. In 1959 the *Herald Post* remarked on both the age and the quality of the carpentry work. It commented that "window shutters are put together with pegs instead of nails, and door and window facings are of wide boards used in a long time past....Carved wood slats that hold the canvas intact are still beautiful." An earlier reporter had noted that "Its doors of finely finished hardwood swung on hand-fashioned iron hinges. Its ceiling, where not covered by a layer of cement, disclosed hand-hewn wooden beams, always a delight to lovers of ancient Mexican architecture."<sup>8</sup>

Mrs. J.A. Escajeda, who had lived in the house with her father and siblings prior to 1920, remembered that "it was very beautiful even then...The big patio was still there and the long porch with 'jarilla.'" However, she lamented that "part of the building has been destroyed...and that it may have been the most

ancient section of the house."<sup>9</sup> During the early 1920's, Judge Leigh Clark, owner of the house from 1910-1911 and again from 1923-1924, made an unusual discovery when he watered his patio. The *Herald* tells the story: "To his astonishment, the patio sank into the earth as the water was turned on. Upon investigation he found that the water had crumbled the beams supporting the ancient Don's wine cellar."<sup>10</sup>

The big house was also noted for its beautiful murals. Although legend ascribed them to an older time, they were probably painted during the 1870's. One of the most popular murals, on the east wall of what Teodora Ellis had called her ballroom, depicted a single tree with spreading branches. Around 1917, J. A. Escajeda, born in San Elizario, instructed his children on the history of the murals:

The tree was painted by a St. Louis artist Mr. Ellis brought out here to do the job...The artist also painted the mural around the wall in the same room, which is a rustic fence joined by logs, and murals of roses in some other rooms. He also painted the canvas ceiling. Two designs were conventional. The third was the 'Last Judgement,' showing the archangel and trumpet.<sup>11</sup>

In an earlier interview, Mrs. Flores had given a more vivid description of the murals:

We loved the paintings, which were still bright at that time. We called the middle one the 'Day of Judgment' because of the angels with trumpets and scrolls. They seemed to be calling the list of the dead...There were other conventional paintings of trees and squirrels.<sup>12</sup>

E. M. Montes, another San Elizario oldtimer, supported Escajeda's claim that the murals originated with Ellis. He stated that "Mrs. Ellis decorated her home in lavish manner. Murals were painted on the adobe walls in various rooms."<sup>13</sup> By 1944, many of the murals were fading. The *Herald Post* reported that "Figures of angels decorate ceilings: other figures are faintly visible beneath several coats of paint in other rooms."<sup>14</sup> The murals were still visible more than a decade later when a reporter noted that "the hugh oil paintings on ceiling and walls are faded and blurred with smoke. Behind the big fireplace a painting of a towering tree covers the entire wall."<sup>15</sup> Not only was the mural still in existence,

the article actually included a picture of the tree in all its glory in 1959! Perhaps behind the gangland graffiti spray painted on the cement plaster, some remnants of the once beautiful murals of Casa Ronquillo still remain.

As may be expected with a dwelling this large, the accompanying grounds were also impressive. According to HABS, a high adobe wall surrounded the house and patio(s). The enclosed complex "included stables for farm animals and an area for farm machinery. To the rear lay a small three-room house separating the main house from the *huerta*, or orchard, and the cultivated fields beyond."<sup>16</sup> In contrast to HABS, the *El Paso World News* reported that "Around the back is a tall rock wall, showing that [the Ronquillo House] had been used both as a home and a fortress..."<sup>17</sup> It may very well have been intended at least in part for defense because Mescalero Apaches, and occasionally Comanches, made San Elizario a hazardous place to live until after the middle 1880's. In 1930, many of the outbuildings of the complex remained. According to the *Herald*, "The 'carriage house' of the old mansion reveals a ceiling with beams fashioned and carved probably by Indian slaves. Adjoining the old structure are innumerable adobe pens and adobe huts."<sup>18</sup>

Despite the changing agricultural practices, Ronquillo House remained a pleasant memory of earlier times. Mrs. Flores remembered the old house as having "an extensive orchard with huge pear and peach trees, apricots, vineyards and alfalfa fields" in 1917.<sup>19</sup> Nor had that changed much by 1932. A *Herald Post* reporter noted that the house was still adorned by "trumpet vine trunks thicker than your arm climbing here and yon" and that the "orchard still existed with fig trees...apple trees (with figs and apples on em) [and] rose trees."<sup>20</sup>

The first historical awareness of the property occurs when Don Rafael Corona died in 1832, and his heirs sold his land and dwelling to Guttierrez, given name unknown. Whether the structure located on the land at that time was the present Casa Ronquillo is unknown, but the title does make it clear that a habitation existed on the land prior to 1832.

José Ignacio Ronquillo purchased at least six parcels of land in San Elizario between 1825 and 1842. He added a house to his list of properties in 1850 that was probably purchased from Guttierrez and is the dwelling now known as Casa Ronquillo.

Ronquillo's will of 1859 gave the description of the house that was used by the HABS in 1980.<sup>21</sup>

*Along with the usual armament of cartridges, firearms, and lances, Ronquillo's men were also equipped with bows and arrows and even stones.*

Ronquillo was an officer in the Mexican Army serving at San Elizario Presidio. He was in the area by at least 1825 and may have been stationed at the Presidio by then. He was likely in command of the Presidio in May 1832, when he led Mexican troops in a fight with Apaches on the Gila River. In the battle, Ronquillo's men killed thirty-two warriors, wounded fifty-one more, and recovered 140 horses. Captain Ronquillo signed the peace treaty that temporarily ended hostilities in August of the same year. In 1836 he was still Captain of the Presidio in charge of sixty-five military personnel. Along with the usual armament of cartridges, firearms, and lances, Ronquillo's men were also equipped with bows and arrows and even stones.<sup>22</sup>

Ronquillo had retired from the army by 1847 and was living in El Paso del Norte (present day Ciudad Juárez). Susan Magoffin, sister-in-law of noted El Paso merchant James Magoffin, visited Ronquillo in February of that year (possibly in the house we now call Casa Ronquillo). She gave a brief description of the former presidial officer in her diary: "Don Ygnacii is a second George Washington in his appearance, and is altogether a great admirer of the man whose name is ever dear to the hearts of the Americans."<sup>23</sup> Ronquillo served as *Juez de Paz* (Justice of the Peace) for San Elizario in 1853, but may have continued to reside in El Paso del Norte. He received permission to erect a mill at Rebalse Alto that was completed in 1854. The mill was to be used for grinding corn and wheat. Although the HABS report indicates that Ronquillo's will was dated 1859, a property transfer from his son, Estanislao, to his wife Elena Jáquez, suggests that Ronquillo was still alive in 1860.

After the death of Ronquillo, title to the property is unclear for a decade. During that period, Juan Armendariz of Socorro, Texas, acquired both *estancia* and land. Although the date of purchase is unclear, he disposed of it in 1869.<sup>24</sup>

Armendariz was a notable character of his time. Born in Texas in May, 1844, he may have been a native of Socorro, his life-

long residence. He showed a propensity for economic acquisition at an early age. Although he listed himself as a laborer in the 1860 census, at the age of sixteen, he had already accumulated \$150 worth of real estate and claimed personal property worth \$100. Armendariz was already molded into the real estate speculator he would remain for the rest of his life. His first wife, Andrea, was a year younger than her husband. They had a daughter, Ponciliana or Poinciana, born about 1863.<sup>25</sup>

By 1870, in his mid-twenties, Armendariz identified himself as a general merchant and indicated a tenfold increase on his real estate value to \$1,500. As a merchant, he claimed personal property value that had multiplied tremendously to \$4,000, a very large amount for a young man of the time and place.<sup>26</sup> Armendariz was well on his way to becoming a wealthy man. Sadly, his wife, Andrea died sometime during the decade, and, around 1870, he married his second wife Filiberta, who was ten years his junior. Filiberta was born in Mexico on August 1, 1854, but was nationalized as an American citizen the following year. About 1872, Armendariz became active in local politics, serving as both treasurer and sheriff of El Paso County and sitting as a county commissioner from Socorro until his death. He served with such noted San Elizario Indian fighters and politicians as Telesforo Montes and Captain Gregorio Garcia.<sup>27</sup>

Armendariz still listed himself as a merchant in 1880, and he had enlarged his family. Poinciana, his daughter, lived at home, and his niece and nephew, Ysabel and Cecilio Cadena, ages fourteen and ten, also lived there, as did seven-year-old José Miller.<sup>28</sup> The couple apparently liked children and participated in both community activities and the church. During the almost thirty-three year span between August 1, 1866 and January 29, 1899, Armendariz was godfather to no less than forty-eight children.<sup>29</sup> He was well-known and respected in his hometown. His "character was of the highest and purest and he was universally beloved throughout the valley....[he was] revered as a man with a large and generous heart, without anger or resentment." His amorous passion, however, was not reserved for Filiberta alone as "he was known throughout the valley as 'Don Juan'."<sup>30</sup>

Armendariz and Benigino Alderete claimed Hueco Tanks, a well-known watering point, as a ranch about 1898, and one of his godsons, Silverio Escontrias, moved from La Luz, New Mexico to run the place. Escontrias eventually acquired title to the land

and built a house on the ranch about 1900. The *huecos* (depressions in the rocks that retained moisture) were used to provide water for the spread.<sup>31</sup>

At the turn of the century, when Juan and Filiberta celebrated their thirtieth wedding anniversary, Armendariz was still a merchant, dealing in dry goods. Despite his political experience, Armendariz, a literate man, admitted at this time that he was unable to speak English.<sup>32</sup> Being monolingual was obviously not a great drawback in the early twentieth century in Socorro, for he continued to increase his holdings. In 1901 he went into a full partnership with Gaspar Girón, a noted merchant, miller, politician, and real estate investor of San Elizario. The two men pooled property and agreed to do business as merchants, millers, farmers, and stock raisers. The partnership continued on beyond the death of both men as the Girón Milling Corporation.<sup>33</sup>

Armendariz was taken seriously ill in August, 1904. On August 19, on his way to Aguascalientes to recuperate, he asked that the train be stopped at Jiménez so he could receive medical attention. There he died a few hours later. His body was returned to Socorro by his friend and partner, Gaspar Girón, and his nephew, Cecilio Cadena. At the time of his death he owned a large cattle ranch at Hueco Tanks, another near Socorro and a large store and flour mill there, as well as his home and farm.<sup>34</sup> Filiberta R. Armendariz was still living in 1910. Continuing in the same vein as her deceased husband, she obtained an income from the rental of farm property. She, too, was literate but, unlike Juan, spoke English. At the age of forty-six, Poinciana continued to live with her stepmother.<sup>35</sup>

Charles E. Ellis had purchased Casa Ronquillo from Juan Armendariz on April 14, 1869. Although Ellis was murdered in 1877, the title remained in his name until the death of his wife Teodora in 1908. As the executor of her estate, Abraham Molina disposed of the property.

Ellis, a native of Maine, arrived in the area in 1862 with the Union forces. He soon opened a store and mill at the northern end of San Elizario near the present intersection of Church and Main streets and rapidly became a familiar resident of the village. Ellis was "a prosperous, affable little man with a brown mustache" who married a local Hispanic woman, Teodora Alarcón. Teodora "was not a pretty woman, but she was large and stately and

gracious, like her house." Although Ellis was an educated man, his wife was illiterate, not even able to sign her own name. When selling land she signed with a "+" that required a witness to be legally binding. Ellis served as sheriff and tax collector for El Paso County from 1871 to 1873.<sup>36</sup>

Ellis was quite wealthy in 1870. In the census, he listed himself as literate and noted his occupation as "G. Merchant." At the age of thirty-five, he owned \$4,000 worth of real estate in the area and had personal property (including the store inventory) valued at \$10,000. In 1870 he was easily the richest man in San Elizario. Teodora was seven years younger than her husband and owned a little property of her own valued at \$50. Although she had been born in Texas, both her parents were from Mexico. The couple was living at Casa Ronquillo which they had purchased the year before. They shared their space with servants, Juan O. Estrada and Pablo Gándara, who was only nine years old, and five employees. Two of the employees, Kenny Fruys and Juan Alarcón, were clerks in the Ellis store, while the other three, Andres Sanchez, Dimicio Panfil, and José Ortez, worked as teamsters, hauling goods and materials to and from the store and mill.<sup>37</sup>

Although the *Mesilla Valley Independent* had described Ellis as "a gentleman who was well-known on this frontier as an honorable and kind-hearted gentleman,"<sup>38</sup> he had fallen into disfavor with the Hispanic population, in part, for arresting Telésforo Montes, well-liked Indian fighter, because Montes would not make his sixteen-year-old daughter go to school.<sup>39</sup> Ellis was therefore not in a good position in the predominantly Hispanic community on the eve of the inter-ethnic confrontation known at the time as the San Elizario Riot and has been remembered historically as the El Paso Salt War.

The violence of 1877 was provoked by a conflict between the free and easy life style of the Anglo-American population and the more formal customs of the long-time occupants, the Hispanics. In the Anglo-American culture, statutory law was always binding, while Hispanics placed more credence in time-honored custom. The Hispanic population of the El Paso Valley and nearby Northern Mexico had been hauling salt for unremembered generations from the salt flats that are located along US highway 62-180, the road to Carlsbad, New Mexico, about ninety miles east of downtown El Paso. When Anglo-American opportunists claimed title to the flats, and refused access to the salt to the

Hispanic population, tension increased. Violence arrived in the form of shoot-outs in Franklin (now El Paso), but, then, for a time, an uneasy peace settled over the valley.

The peace was broken on the night of December 12, 1877, when Charles W. Howard, leader of the Salt Ring and the man most hated by the Hispanics, arrived in San Elizario with a company of hastily assembled, newly recruited Texas Rangers. Ellis, who had further weakened his ties with the village population by befriending Howard, invited him into Casa Ronquillo for the night. When Howard and Ellis heard sounds of a crowd forming in the village square, Ellis went to investigate. The crowd was so disturbed by the presence of Howard in town that soon their temper grew nasty. By the time Ellis realized the precariousness of his position, it was too late.<sup>40</sup> An eyewitness described the action:

Eutemio Chavez rode up on horseback and threw a lasso over Ellis and started on a run, dragging the unfortunate man; after he had dragged him some distance he then got down and cut his throat and the body was thrown to the coyotes.<sup>41</sup>

The mob surrounded the Rangers and fighting continued for two days. Five or six of the mob and two Rangers were killed. Captain Garcia, a well-known local Indian-fighter who had sided with the Rangers, was wounded twice. The newspaper erroneously identified Miguel Garcia, one the slain rangers, as Captain Garcia's son.<sup>42</sup> Howard eventually surrendered to the mob which executed him along with John Atkinson, another Anglo-American merchant of the town. During the rioting, looters pillaged Ellis' home, store, and steam mill. The *Independent* reported that "Doña Teodora, the widow of Ellis, was robbed of her jewelry, dresses, bed clothing, furniture—everything; her house was stripped."<sup>43</sup> Sonnichsen claims that when Teodora "asked the robbers to leave her something to eat, they laughed in her face."<sup>44</sup>

In the aftermath of the riot, the Rangers and a posse of angry men from Mesilla, New Mexico, terrorized the Hispanic community of the Lower Valley. They killed several Hispanics. The fighting ended, but, four years later, the Southern Pacific railroad owners bypassed what they must have considered a dangerous community and established their main terminal in the small town that became known as El Paso, Texas.

Teodora continued living in Casa Ronquillo after Ellis' death and apparently continued to run the business her husband had established. She shared her home with some of her employees. George Kohlhaus and Jesús Juárez were both clerks, while Espiridion Chaves, Pablo Gándara, and Refugio Estrada listed their occupations as "laborer." The final two residents were very young. Both Tom Collins and Manuel Alvedres were only ten years old at the time of the 1880 census. Occupations are listed for the two boys, but, unfortunately, they are illegible.<sup>45</sup> At some point, Teodora may have moved away from San Elizario for she is not listed in the 1900 census, the last census before her death in 1908.

Seth B. Orndorff purchased Casa Ronquillo from the estate of Teodora Ellis on August 11, 1908. This is the first deed in which acreage is recorded. The house and property by that time consisted of 9.46 acres. Although Orndorff lived in the house for two years, he was not listed during the April 13-27 enumeration of the 1910 census. He disposed of the property on September 17, 1910.

Orndorff, a native of Moundville, Missouri, migrated west with his family in 1887. The boy and his family passed through El Paso on the way to Tucson, but returned in 1898, and Orndorff remained for the duration of his life. His mother, Alzina Allis Orndorff (later Mrs. Charles deGross), purchased the Hotel Vendome, El Paso's oldest hotel, shortly after her arrival, later bringing her sons Burt, Lee, and Seth into the business.<sup>46</sup> Seth married a Louisiana belle, Mattie Dee Patterson, in January, 1907 and remained married long enough for the couple to celebrate their fiftieth wedding anniversary in 1957. As a real estate speculator, Orndorff built the Hotel Cortez (formerly the Hotel Orndorff) before becoming a politician serving the Lower Valley as county commissioner from about 1916 to 1918. He was first elected sheriff on November 5, 1918 and was reelected five times. His twelve-year term as sheriff was the longest that anyone had held that office. A Presbyterian and a member of the Masonic Order, Orndorff died on September 26, 1961 at the age of eighty after spending sixty-three years in El Paso.<sup>47</sup>

Leigh Clark purchased the property from Seth B. Orndorff on September 17, 1910. Just six months later, on March 25, 1911, he transferred title to his daughter, Frances L. Clark, who married

Dr. James Vance in 1912. The home may have been an early wedding present. The Vances rented the house on at least one occasion to the J. S. Escajeda family around 1917. Whether they lived in the home or used it as a rental property at other times is unknown. The couple owned Casa Ronquillo until August 20, 1923, when they returned the property to Leigh Clark. Leigh Clark again relinquished his claim to the property in a very short time, this time transferring the home to his wife, Myra Prater Clark, on January 21, 1924. Judge Clark died shortly thereafter, but Mrs. Clark owned the property until 1944.

Judge Leigh Clark was a well-known figure in El Paso in the early twentieth century. Born in Mississippi on March 28, 1854, he attended the University of Virginia, but failed to complete his studies because of poor health. He then studied law in his brother's legal office and was eventually admitted to the Mississippi bar. His arrival in El Paso was less than auspicious. While passing through town in 1884 en route to San Diego, California, he became unconscious and was removed from the train and taken to the Grand Hotel. Clark recovered and remained a resident of El Paso until his death. Despite his poor health, Clark could be belligerent when provoked and was noted for engaging in fist-fights when arguments became heated.<sup>48</sup>

Clark married Fanny Echols in 1890, and the following year she gave birth to a daughter, Frances. Fanny was born in Adairsville, Georgia, in 1864 and came to El Paso in 1886 to teach public school. With Mary Stanton, she founded the El Paso Public Library. Fanny Echols Clark died on April 1, 1907. Clark remained single for several years until he married Myra Prater in 1922.<sup>49</sup>

Leigh Clark was a noted politician, serving in such capacities as City Attorney and City Recorder. He was elected District Attorney in 1916 and retained that position for six years. He was a partner in the firm of Clark, Fall, Hawkins, and Franklin and helped organize the El Paso Electric Company. Judge Leigh Clark died on November 30, 1929 at the age of seventy-five, leaving Myra a widow after only seven years of marriage.<sup>50</sup>

Myra Prater Clark had come to El Paso in 1902. She taught school for more than fifty years and was the principal of Beall School for forty-five years. Mrs. Clark died on May 19, 1965.

Shortly after Judge Clark's death, Mrs. Clark began operating the property as the Motor Inn, a term used by most San Elizario residents to identify Casa Ronquillo today. The Motor



*A recent photograph of the existing structure of Casa Ronquillo. Photo courtesy Brian Gross, 1996.*

Inn was in use by 1925 when a contingent of the American Federation of Labor Convention, including the noted union leader, Samuel Gompers, stayed there. The Motor Inn apparently made full use of the spacious *estancia*, including multiple dining rooms, for the comfort of the guests. The *Herald Post* noted that the A. F. of L. “delegates from many American cities, from London, the continent, and South American countries ate chicken in one of the dining rooms.” Chicken may have been a specialty of the Motor Inn or merely a favorite of the reporter, for he mentioned it again, reminiscing that his readers “may have known it as the Motor Inn, where chicken dinners were served under the old roof beamed with the twisted trunks of mesquite trees.”<sup>51</sup> By 1935, the Motor Inn had a new name. Although it was still owned by Mrs. Clark, it was renamed *Casa del Rey*, and was operated by Mr. and Mrs. A. P. Smith. Unfortunately, no record appears to explain the function of *Casa del Rey* although it may have continued as some form of lodging.<sup>52</sup>

Mrs. Clark sold the property to Mr. and Mrs. Frank A. Smith of Clint in September, 1944. The couple used the *estancia* as a rental property, then tenanted by Mr. and Mrs. Tom Helms.<sup>53</sup> Just over a decade later, the *Herald Post* lamented of “a once magnificent house in San Elizario, which today has been turned into one room apartments for Lower Valley farm workers.” The proud ballroom of Doña Teodora Ellis, now called the salon, was

"occupied by Mr. and Mrs. N. Lopez and their 10 children" with "other families liv[ing] in adjacent apartments." The Lopez apartment still retained the more than a century-old mural of the spreading tree.<sup>54</sup> By March, 1968, occupancy of Casa Ronquillo was ended. The outbuildings, orchard, patios, and most of the rooms were gone. The remaining block of five rooms was donated to El Paso Landmarks, Inc. for preservation.<sup>55</sup>

In 1996, all that remains is a single room block consisting of five rooms, including the main ballroom, all covered with gang-land graffiti. The mighty walls that enclosed the patios are gone, along with the other two room blocks, now a part of the plowed cotton field. Although its days of grandeur may be gone, its past is now recalled, and Casa Ronquillo can now take its place among other respected historical buildings in the El Paso Valley.

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#### NOTES

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37. Ninth Census of the United States, 1870.
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42. *MVI*, December 22, 1877, January 26, 1878.
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## **A Ranch Raid on Christmas Day In the Big Bend Country of West Texas**

*By George Richard "Tex" Shannon*

*(article starts on page 87)*

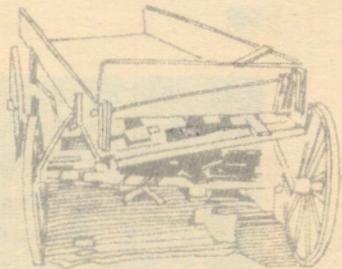
*EDITOR'S NOTE: This manuscript was brought to light by Patrick Peevey's entry in the Frank W. Gorman Memorial Historical Essay Contest for 1996.*

*Its author, George Richard "Tex" Shannon, was born in San Antonio in 1881. His father, James Andrew Shannon, had visited briefly the Fort Davis area in 1867. Married and with a son, he and his wife, Mary Ann, and baby George moved to Fort Davis in 1882. There they lived until 1891, then they moved to Shafter where James A. became mill foreman for Presidio Mining Company. In 1908, he purchased the stage line between Marfa and Shafter which his older sons, George and James, drove while he continued to work at the mill. Later in 1908, George moved to Marfa, where he opened a meat market in which he sold, among other meats, "fresh oysters" at ten cents a dozen. Starting in 1924, he operated a dairy at his home. His writing shows that he considered himself a cowboy. Tex Shannon died in El Paso on October 25, 1943.*

*The Brite Ranch raid of December 25, 1917, is perhaps the most often related event in the history of Presidio County (see Cecilia Thompson, History of Marfa and Presidio County, Texas, 1535-1946. (2 vols; Austin: Nortex Press, 1985, II, pp. 144-148, and Ron Tyler et al. eds. The New Handbook of Texas. 6 vols; Austin: Texas State Historical Association, 1996, I, 743). All accounts differ in some details, but Tex Shannon's narrative is especially valuable because it sheds new light, and gives additional information, on the organization of the posse and its chase of the raiders.*

*In order to preserve the "flavor" of the original, this piece was not edited.*

*Appreciation is extended to Lorena Peevey, George Shannon's niece and Patrick Shannon's grandmother, for permission to print the article, and to Teresa Peevey, Patrick Peevey's mother, for reproducing it.*



# A Ranch Raid on Christmas Day

*In the Big Bend Country of West Texas*

By George Richard "Tex" Shannon

**S**ome of the readers of this story may have heard of that part of Texas called the Big Bend, and the raids perpetrated by Mexican Bandits, but few have read or heard of the murderous raid on the L.C. Brite Ranch on Christmas Day, 1917.

Marfa, in Presidio County, Texas, is the main shipping point for thousands of the Hereford cattle that are raised and roam over the thousands of acres of the rich grama [grass] lands. Eighteen miles to the north are the Davis Mountains with their gigantic peaks and mighty pines, standing out as a symbol of God's creation. Seventy-two miles southward along the Mexico boundary runs the historic Rio Grande, making a three hundred mile bend in its course from which the country lying in this immense semi-circle gets its name, the Big Bend Country of West Texas.

In this Big Bend Country there were hundreds of large and prosperous cattle ranches, one of which was the scene of this murderous raid from Mexican Bandits who had crossed the Rio Grande from Mexico to kill and steal from the ranchers.

The World's War was in progress, Mexico was seething with revolutions, and that portion of Mexico bordering the Big Bend of Texas was overrun with fierce bandit bands. The leader of one band was Chico Cano. *Pato del Ule* (foot of rubber or cork) was a notorious leader of another band of thieves and murderers who preyed on the ranches of Texas.

A United States Army Post had been established at Marfa, from which outposts of Cavalry were maintained along the Rio

Grande at intervals of fifteen to twenty miles. These outposts got their supplies from the post by truck and mule pack trains. An Aviation Field had been also established at Marfa. Airplanes were used for scout duty and to transport mail to and from the outposts.

Many, but not all, of the ranch owners had moved their families to towns along the Southern Pacific Railroad, it not being safe for women and children to stay at the outlying ranches during these troublesome times.

On this Christmas Day of 1917 many ranchmen and cowboys had come into Marfa to visit with their families and friends, leaving their ranches lightly guarded as there had been a lull in the raids. Things seemed more quiet and peaceful. A happiness had settled over the cattle ranges, a stillness that comes sometimes before a storm. Services were held in the many churches, hymns of praise for our Glorious Savior were being sung, joyous greetings and exchanges of love with our fellowmen were said. Tables were being prepared for a bounteous feast of rich food prepared by our mothers and wives. The joyous cries of little children were heard with their candy and toys they had gotten from the Christmas trees, all but some children on a far away ranch were happy. Their tree too was richly decorated and loaded with presents Old Santa had brought. The candles on the tree were waiting the touch of a match to throw rays of light over its rich foliage and splendor, a token of praise to God on High.

But alas, the candles were never lighted. This ranch house remained in darkness and shadow that bright Christmas Day. This was the headquarters of the L.C. Brite Ranches, where Van Neill, foreman, his wife and three children lived. His parents and sister were with him to spend Christmas. They were expecting other guests and relatives from Fort Davis to share their Christmas dinner. Just before the light of dawn, Sam Neill, Van's father, had gotten up to make the coffee, as is the wont of the eldest member of the family in most every home in the West. Old Man Sam, as he was affectionately called by his friends, has now passed to the Great Beyond.

While he was waiting for the coffee to boil, the morning light was breaking over hill and plain, he looked out of the window towards the Great Rim Rock and Old Mexico, and to his surprise he saw a large band of horsemen riding at full speed towards the ranch house. He had not a second to lose; running to the front of the house, calling, "Van, get up quick, there is a band of Mexicans

coming, and they don't look good to me." Van jumped out of bed, grabbed a shotgun, ran to a window in the front part of the house, while Old Man Sam returned to the rear of the building with a rifle, just in time to meet a bunch of mounted bandits charging in at the back gate. His first shot dropped one bandit from his mount. The others, taken by surprise at the marksmanship of the old frontiersman, turned their horses by a pull on the reins and severe Spanish bit and took shelter back of the adobe store building. From here a heavy rifle fire was poured on the ranch house with the murderous intent to kill all within. Mrs. Van Neill rushed to the telephone to call for aid. Central did not answer as the telephone wire had been cut and the phone was dead. The next best thing to do was to carry ammunition to the two brave defenders of the family and home. With the assistance of Mrs. Sam Neill, these brave women helped, and stayed by their husbands all through the fight.

A charge was made on the front of the building where Van had stationed himself. He opened up with a shotgun, shooting at their faces. They would turn back running for cover, shaking their bleeding heads and faces. Van could not understand why they did not drop from the charges of buckshot he was sending into their faces and heads. He soon discovered that some hunters had been at the Brite Ranch hunting quail and had left shells containing small bird shot and he was using these instead of the ones loaded with buckshot. Charge after charge was made as the hours that seemed like years to the little band of Americans wore on. Van's wife carried more ammunition and loaded the guns as Van repulsed each charge on the front of their home.

While these attacks were going on in front, Old Man Sam kept up a steady fire from the rear, holding the bandits in check from that direction. He had stepped outside and was shooting from a corner with his face pressed against the wall. A bandit's



*At the Brite Store, January, 1918, where the raiders looted this building: T. T. (Van) Neill, and father, Sam Neill. Photo courtesy Noel Keith, "The Brides of Capote," Ft. Worth: Texas Christian University Press 1950.*

bullet struck, Old Man Sam went down. In a second he was up again with blood running down his face. While his vision was clearing, he was shooting, holding back those bloodthirsty villains. The blood that trickled down his face was caused from gravel knocked off the wall by the bandits' bullets. This he brushed away with his sleeve as he kept up his firing.

All through the firing, the children, two little girls and a small boy, were huddled together on the floor, watched over by a faithful old Mexican woman, a servant in the home.

Pierre Guyon and his wife were living in a small house some distance beyond the store building. They could see thirty-five bandits taking shelter back of the store. As Pierre and his wife had not been discovered they did not shoot; they kept quiet. After some hours, the bandits' firing suddenly ceased and a voice from one of their band called out, "Give us the store, and we will not bother you and your families." "Take the store but do not try to come any nearer the ranch house," answered Van. A few Mexicans who worked on the ranch and their families were being held prisoners in an outhouse. A small number of the bandits took these Mexicans to help drive up the ranch horses while the rest broke in and began robbing the store of its big stock of clothing and groceries. They donned new suits, hats, boots and shirts, leaving discarded clothing scattered about.

"Here comes the mail stage," cried a bandit, standing outside the store. There was a rush to meet it, anxious to rob Uncle Sam's mail pouches. On meeting the oncoming hack, they were disappointed to find that it was not the United States Mail stage, but a hack drawn by two horses, bound for Valentine, Texas. The occupants, a Mexican man and his small son, were taken from the vehicle and searched: nothing of value was found, so this angered the bandit leader and he ordered the man shot. He told his men to stand back a few yards and shoot the prisoner down with their pistols. The little boy began to cry and begged for his father's life. He said, "Please, please, do not shoot my papa." The bandits laughed at the little fellow's plea, all but one whose heart was touched by the pleadings of the little Mexican boy of his own race and color. This one bandit stepped forward and asked his leader to spare his countryman. "No," replied the leader. "No, but lead him over to the arroyo out of the kid's sight, if you have the heart of a chicken, and shoot him there."

At this juncture, the United States Mail stage came into sight.

For the moment the prisoners were forgotten and left standing, while preparations were being made to hold up the mail stage. The prisoners, taking advantage of this new melee, crawled to the arroyo that had just been designated as the scene for the older prisoner's last hour on earth, and made their escape.

The stage was held up. It carried no passengers, the only occupant being the grey-haired stage driver Mickey Welch who for many years had driven stages over the plains of the west. He was made to drive the stage up to the ranch quarters; here he was forced to get down from the driver's seat, his hands were tied at his back by the bloodthirsty raiders, who at once marched him into the store from which he never returned alive (May his soul rest in peace). He did many favors for his friends and for strangers as well. He was a personal friend of the writer who held his friendship with great esteem until the last. At this writing, I still remember the many kind deeds he did for us cowboys in the cow camps along the Big Rim Rock, one in particular was to bring a bottle of railroad lantern oil now and then for my lantern that we used in camp and in dark caves when chasing panthers with dogs. For this he would never accept a cent of pay, as was his custom with all whom he favored.

As this was going on the long expected guests arrived, Brother H.M. Bandy, a minister of the Gospel and two little girls, cousins to the children in the besieged ranch home. They had come from old Fort Davis to spend a few days with their friend and relatives. Brother Bandy, not knowing of the raid, drove his car into the open space between the ranch house and the store occupied by the bandits and started to get out. The faithful old Mexican woman rushed from the house, placed herself between Brother Bandy and the bandits, she cried out, "Don't shoot, don't shoot, this is a minister or padre, don't shoot." The bandits withheld their fire, showing respect for the Man of God. Brother Bandy reached for his gun that lay in the car. The Mexican servant pushed his hand away from the gun saying, "No, no, come." The preacher now began to understand the words and frantic actions of the trustworthy Mexican woman. He rushed the two little girls to the ranch house, at the door he met Mrs. Van Neill who said, "Brother Bandy we are being raided, pray for us." "I am praying, give me a gun," replied Brother Bandy who was an old Indian fighter.

The bandits packed something like one hundred head of Brite horses with all kinds of merchandise taken from the big

store. Some were loaded with flour, others with sacks of beans, more with c'othing, hats, shoes and bolt goods. Driving these pack animals, the bandits headed for a single trail that led off the Big Rim Rock toward the Rio Grande and Mexico. Van and his father, Old Man Sam, started to rush out when the bandits rode away, but were held back by brother Bandy saying, "Wait men, don't go outside yet. There is an old Indian trick they may try to play on you." Brother Bandy saved their lives as five bandits were hidden behind a dirt embankment waiting for the men to come out.

*Becoming worried, thinking all might not be well, he proceeded to investigate. On nearing the headquarters ranch, he could see someone waving an arm from the back window in the house in which Pierre Guyon and wife were hidden.*

An employee on one of the Brite Ranches to the east had been trying to call up the headquarters ranch by telephone all morning. He had not been able to get a response to his many calls. Becoming worried, thinking all might not be well, he proceeded to investigate. On nearing the headquarters ranch, he could see someone waving an arm from the back window in the house in which Pierre Guyon and wife were hidden. He understood the signal, turned his car and raced back to a distant telephone from which he rang Central at Marfa, Texas.

At Marfa, thirty miles to the east, it was the noon hour, soldiers and civilians were ready to sit down to the Christmas dinner tables loaded with turkey and rich Christmas feast. Central heard a cowboy's call coming over a single wire from the range land. She listened and heard the words "Brite's Ranch is being raided." She phoned the message to the army post and to our homes. All were thrown into confusion; Christmas dinners were forgotten and family reunions broken. Soldiers, Texas Rangers, townsmen and cowboys were immediately formed into posses, each posse was allowed as many soldiers as they had transportation for. Before leaving the army post, the commanding officer called me to one side and said, "You boys are heavily loaded, I do not think you will have room to bring back any prisoners." We had no intention of doing so as it was not the custom of the Big Bend Country in those days to be burdened with prisoners.

Cars carrying the posses were driven at the highest speed the hilly roads would permit. Mile after mile of the distance were being lopped up, bringing the cars out of the hills and onto the Brite flat where clouds of dust arose from the speeding automobiles. Each occupant was anxious to get the first shot at the Mexican band. On arriving at the Brite Ranch, members of the posses sighted the bandits retreating into the rough canyons of Big Rim Rock. The posses followed in cars as there were no saddle horses left as the bandits had taken them all. The lead car came onto an old scarcely traveled road in a rough canyon that promised to lead in the right direction; all the other cars followed. After going some distance, this proved to be an old work road that turned back and away from the desired course. All were then compelled to turn back and look for another route as the precious moments were fleeting by. After some time, a pass was found, permitting the cars to be driven in a westerly course on the bandit's trail, over boulders and cactuses that abound in this rough, arid country.

As it was difficult to make progress in the cars, they were abandoned not a great way from the crest of the Big Rim Rock off which the bandits had gone, following a narrow winding trail beyond the great hanging walls of the Rim, many thousand of feet below. The posse reaching the crest, opened fire on the fleeing raiders. The unshod horses from the Brite flat which the Mexicans had taken, were carrying heavy packs, and being crowded and jammed as they were, were driven over the sharp pointed rocks along the untraveled trail.

When the posse began firing, the bandits were in range of the high-powered guns of the soldiers, Texas Rangers and cowboys for a short time only, but many shots reached their mark; horses went down scattering packs of clothing and flour down the steep mountainside. Bandits were wounded; one was killed and identified later as having been an officer in the Carranzista Army. Realizing that it was impossible to carry the pursuit further without horses, the pursuers returned to the Brite ranch, where a gruesome sight met their eyes as they entered. Mickey Welch's body with one end of a rope around his neck and the other fastened to a rafter, dangled in the air, and his throat had been cut from ear to ear. Do you wonder why so few prisoners were taken alive in the Big Bend Country of West Texas?

Captain [J. Monroe] Fox of the Texas Rangers with four of his men left the Brite Ranch by automobile, headed southwest

over the Rim Rock mail road for Candelaria, a town on the Texas side of the Rio Grande, to procure saddle horses and again take up the chase. Our party of eleven soldiers and cowboys got horses at the Shannon Brothers' Ranch south and adjoining the Brite Ranch. We too, started for Candelaria, hitting the Rio Grande some miles below the town. In the dense mesquite we ran across a "rookey" whom we thought was a troop guard. We had been thinking that we would probably find soldiers in or near Candelaria, and we were very careful, not wanting to be mistaken for bandits in the darkness. The "rookey" did not challenge us as we rode up. Asking him where his commanding officer was, he replied, "At Fort Bliss, near El Paso." He was then asked who his commanding officer was here. "Colonel Langhorne at Marfa, Texas," was his answer. We noticed that he was frightened, that he was only a boy in his teens. He looked at the soldiers in our party and asked, "Who are you men anyway, Texas Rangers?" The soldier nearest him straightened up in his saddle and replied, "Yes, we are all Texas Rangers." This reply brought a laugh from us all. The "rookey" got over his scare and told us his troop commander was Captain Anderson. His captain had sent him back to find the mule pack train following the troop and to hurry it up. He had been unable to find the pack train and accompanied us to Captain Anderson's camp at Candelaria. Here at Candelaria we met Captain Fox and his rangers, waiting for horses they had sent out for; Captain Fox asked us to wait until their mounts were brought in and all leave about daybreak. In this way we would not miss the trail by riding over it in the darkness. We decided to wait and let our horses get some rest for the long ride ahead.

Captain Anderson's pack train came in after midnight. After a short rest his troop moved on, going up the Rio Grande. We followed about daylight with the Rangers. Our little party now numbered sixteen, with Captain Fox, a veteran of many bandit fights in the lower Rio Grande Valley, in command. We had traveled fifteen miles in a northwesterly direction before finding any signs of the bandits' tracks. These were headed towards the Brite Ranch and for the next five miles we cut their trail at intervals. They did not cross from Mexico in one body but all trails led in one direction, towards a spring in the Rim Rock near the Brite Ranch. At this spring on Christmas Eve the bandits had met, cooked food under the shelter of the giant hanging walls of the Rim, and planned the brutal raid for the morrow. Captain Anderson's troop

of Cavalry had been ordered up from Ruidosa to try to intercept the bandits before they reached the river. The Cavalry troop that was stationed at Candelaria had received the same orders. This troop left before we reached Candelaria and made fast time going up the river, in fact they traveled too fast, passing the objective crossing from which the bandits were heading. The bandits had crossed the Rio Grande behind this troop from Candelaria and just ahead of Captain Anderson's troop from Ruidosa.

The scouts with Captain Anderson picked up the trail of the fleeing bandits. The trail was smeared with blood from the hoofs of the unshod horses taken from the prairie land or better known as Brite Flat. This flat was covered with soft soil on which grew toboso, or bunch grass, and it was not necessary to shoe the horses that grazed over and that were used on the flat. Their hoofs were not hard enough to withstand the heavy packs and the continuous rasping and grinding of the sharp stones along the mountain trail. They were worn to the quick.

The trail crossed the Rio Grande in one of the roughest sections of the Big Bend Country. Following Captain Anderson, we traveled a narrow trail in single file through mesquite and tornillo brush, between high boulders, and at times we were compelled to dismount so that our horses might squeeze through.

Up steep hillsides, then almost straight down again into the brush and prickly pear. This was punishment for our tired sweating horses, but we urged them on. Captain Anderson led his men across the Rio Grande, entering Mexico at the mouth of a canyon walled in on either side by high bluffs containing many caves. Masses of broken rock lay in great slides, brush and gigantic boulders made an ideal place for an ambush, or at least a last stand. Here the bandits tried to hold their pursuers in check. Captain Anderson threw his men into action; one soldier was killed and some were wounded when the bandits gave way. There ensued a running fight; the fleeing Mexicans made good targets in their new stolen clothes. One I remember in particular who went away riding a mule and wearing a new suit

*Masses of broken rock lay in great slides, brush and gigantic boulders made an ideal place for an ambush, or at least a last stand. Here the bandits tried to hold their pursuers in check.*

of blue and a grey Stetson hat. He was out of range of our guns, and we had to laugh as we watched him through our field glasses, kicking and beating on the mule's slow end with a double rope.

Behind the troops in the canyon, the mule pack train led by a civilian guide, followed with supplies for the soldiers and grain for their horses. As the guide was leading across a small plat of open ground, there came a roar from guns high up on the hill-side, the pack train was being attacked by an unseen foe. The guide dismounted, stretched flat in a gully and with trained eyes, he tried to locate the position of the enemy. Crash! came another volley, a pack mule was killed. The guide was almost hit, a ball striking the ground near his head and covered his face with dirt. Another volley was showered down on the pack train, another mule was killed while the packers and the guide tried to find something to shoot at. As the guide was being peppered, he noticed an object in a cave raise up and disappear. He drew bead on the spot with his rifle and waited. The object, a bandit's head, appeared again and he pulled the trigger, the bandit lurched forward with a bullet hole between his eyes. The guide drew bead again where another head had disappeared. As it appeared again he pulled on the trigger and another bandit lurched forward. A third mule was shot down, but another bandit paid with his life as the unerring aim of the old guide found its mark. This was too much to face, the Mexican bandits who did not have their thick skins pierced by a rifle ball, crawled-out between the large boulders and cracks along the bluffs and sought safer hiding places.

The number of bandits killed in this fight will never be known as no count was made. Their bodies were left where they fell, on Mexican soil, a lesson to those of the same breed that escaped and scattered in the wild vastness of Mexico.

The body of one American soldier was brought back to dear old United States and given a Military Funeral. He was carried beneath the folds of the Stars and Stripes to his last resting place. The sun was sinking in the golden west, shadows gathered over the range and his comrades stood at attention while prayers were said by the Chaplain. His body was lowered in the grave and covered. The soul of another American boy had gone West. A hush, taps were sounded, bringing to an end another sad story of the West.

# Editor's Note

By James M. Day

One of the hot topics around the Texas State Historical Association Office in the late 1950s was the Junior Historian movement. It still is an emphasis of the organization. Originated in 1939, the Junior Historians evolved to have their own magazine, a banquet with their own program, and a historical writing contest. I was privileged to be a judge for some of those contests in days gone by and to write an editorial for the Junior Historian magazine.

The El Paso County Historical Society has sponsored such a writing contest since 1961. It originated as the brainchild of Frank W. Gorman, Sr., who provided the prizes anonymously until his death in 1974. At that time the contest was for seventh grade students.

After his death, the Gorman family offered to continue funding the contest under the sponsorship of the Society. The contest is now known as the Frank W. Gorman Memorial Historical Essay Contest and is open to seventh, eighth, and ninth graders. Cash awards are given for the top three essays.

This year's winners were announced at the Society's quarterly meeting on May 12, 1996. Patrick McEwen Peevey won first place with an essay entitled "From the Brite Ranch to the Brite Sights." Second prize went to Nicholas Varela for "Grandparents - Adolph and Josephine Varela," and third prize went to Elizabeth Hutchison for "My Grandfather - The Modern Day Savior." All are commendable.

The lead article in this *Password* is Peevey's essay. It is good writing, and it illustrates the value of young persons who delve into their past. And some of the article was "Tex" Shannon's account of a raid on the Brite Ranch on December 25, 1917. Because young Peevey took the time to do the research, a hitherto unpublished manuscript came to light and is also published in this issue.

All of which points out the value of Frank W. Gorman's vision and the good work of Patrick Peevey.



## Book Reviews

**RODANT PEL MON: ROAMING ABOUT THE WORLD WITH URBICI SOLER—SCULPTOR (1890–1953)** by Paul Dean Daniggelis, El Paso: International Association for the Visual Arts, 1995, \$24.95

To read a book whose characters are among ones acquaintances is—to say the least—a joy. *Rodant Pel Mon*, the story of Urbici Soler, the sculptor of *Cristo Rey*, is just such a book. El Pasoan Paul Dean Daniggelis has produced a book which provides insight into the strivings of an artist who was something of a square peg in a round hole. This is also a book which has much interest for students of El Paso history and art, for it also provides insight into the problems faced by artists—then and now. Much as Soler tried to adapt, and to adopt the style extant in the world around him, he could not.

Urbici Jose Francisco Soler y Manonelles, whose art and life took him to three continents, was born in Catalan, Spain in a small village not far from Barcelona in 1890. In his early teens, he apprenticed himself to sculptors and learned his craft well. Although he mingled with the famous artists of the day, their modern trends did not change his traditional and classical leanings.

He left his family at an early age to study and work, never to return to his homeland. His travels and studies made him a “Man of the World” as he went forth from Barcelona to Madrid, Munich, Paris, Buenos Aires, Santiago de Chile, Montevideo, Mexico City, Oaxaca, Puebla, Patzcuaro, San Francisco, New Orleans, New York, and El Paso.

In South America, he produced some of his best works: studies of the Araucanian Indians and his first portrait of Diego Rivera. His reliefs, monuments, and even a fountain, as well as his portraits won acclaim and were financially successful. His exhibitions in San Francisco and in Mexico City also won plaudits.

In 1937, in Mexico City, Soler met an El Paso priest, Father Lourdes Francis Costa, a fellow Catalan, who soon convinced

Soler to come to El Paso to execute Costa's conception of a monument on a mountain which became Sierra de Cristo Rey. The project, from the very beginning, was plagued by politics and intrigue. Changes in design, questions of authority, mismanagement, the blasting of the mountain to construct a road, and unexplained delays all conspired against the sculptor. Although the completion date was moved from October 1938 to October 1939, the monument was not finished as Soler had envisioned and planned it. He was, however, proud of the monument as it stood.

His social life in El Paso and his teaching at The Texas College of Mines brought him into contact with prominent people. Among his friends and acquaintances were Tom Lea, Cleofas Calleros, Leola Freeman, Hari Kidd, Patricia McCormick, Carl Hertzog, Jim Tillotson, Erich de Bruyn, Ed Pooley, Dr. Carlos Castaneda, and Ernie Pyle. It was Soler who introduced his student Manuel Acosta to Peter Hurd. His *Cristo Moreno* has Simeon "Bud" Newman's ankle and Baxter Polk's knee! The manuscript is filled with stories of El Pasoans, making it a valuable book on El Paso history. In the early 1950's, Soler began to build a home in Anapra at the foot of Sierra de Cristo Rey, and it was there that he died on January 15, 1953.

If many men are said to be ahead of their time, Soler can be said to have been behind his time. In a world bristling with "modern" and "avant garde," he retained the strong imprint of the classical. Soler was never fitted for the world as it was evolving: he was of a world that existed before his time. As he said of himself, "...I believe I was born in a world that does not pertain to me....Limping from place to place, through this magnificent valley...my soul thirsty for delicacies of friendship, of spiritual communication, of human companionship, my soul was always an orphan, alone; with everyone, but alone." (p.199)

Paul Dean Daniggelis was born in New York. He is a writer by avocation, but his professional life has been spent as a draftsman. He attended Queens College and completed his education at The University of Texas at El Paso. While there, he was assigned the task of writing a paper on "Sculptor Urbici Soler," about whom he found very little information. The assignment ignited a passion that sent him on a twenty-year pilgrimage which culminated in *Rodant Pel Mon*. This is a well-documented book which contains many photographs that constitute a precise, well-defined historical record of Soler's life and work. He has also included appendices which add to an understanding of Urbici Soler.

*Rodant Pel Mon* is an interesting book about an interesting man who made a substantial contribution to his world, especially to El Paso. It is not easily read, but it is a satisfying experience. The prefatory note by Tom Lea is a literary gem. Danigellis' bibliography is superb, and adds substantially to the book.

MARILYN GROSS

El Paso

**PIONEERS OF THE MESILLA VALLEY** by Paxton P. Price. \$19.95: **ONLY THE ECHOES: THE LIFE OF HOWARD BASS CUSHING** by Kenneth A. Randall, \$12.95/\$25.00 (limited cloth edition). Las Cruces: Yucca Tree Press, 1995

Two books recently published by Yucca Tree Press in Las Cruces demonstrate the effectiveness of biography as a way of revealing interesting and sometimes very obscure aspects of a region's history.

*Pioneers of the Mesilla Valley*, authored by retired librarian and army officer Paxton P. Price, who grew up in Doña Ana County, offers capsule biographies of seventy-seven people who helped establish the economic, educational, and political life of the Mesilla Valley. These people range from judges like Warren Bristol (who, after hearing the issues in the Lincoln County War, became Third United States District Judge for thirteen years) through Spanish grandees like Martin Amador (remembered for the Las Cruces hotel that bore his name) to lawman and businessman Samuel G. Bean whose fame was eclipsed by that of his brothers Joshua, first mayor of San Diego, and Roy Bean, noted Texas judge.

Many of the subjects had El Paso and Ciudad Juárez connections or had lived in one or both of those communities before going to Doña Ana County. Two who had interests in El Paso del Norte (now Ciudad Juarez) were Henry J. Cuniffe, consul there after the Civil war, and Horace Stephenson, son of Hugh Stephenson of Concordia, who had business interests there before moving to La Mesa.

The book opens with an interesting historical essay about the development of the area, accompanied by a map showing the land grants along the Rio Grande in southern New Mexico and the western tip of Texas. Additional illustrations include photographs of many of the seventy-seven subjects, as well as six drawings by Jose Cisneros of Spanish, Apache, and Anglo-American settlers. Sources for each of the biographical essays are listed at the end of the book, and an Appendix lists office holders in the county for the last half of the nineteenth century.

*Pioneers of the Mesilla Valley* is a welcome addition to the history of the southern New Mexico-El Paso region.

Equally welcome is the other recent Yucca Tree Press release. Titled *Only the Echoes*, the book traces the brief life of Howard S. Cushing, one of four brothers who served the Union during the Civil War and who elected to remain in the military after the war.

Cushing transferred from the Fourth Artillery to the Third Cavalry in 1868, commissioned as a first lieutenant in command of Troop F. The troop was assigned to the Canadian River Expedition at Fort Bascom, New Mexico, scouting for hostile Indians. It destroyed a Comanche village in present Oklahoma, then was sent to Fort Stanton. In 1869 Troop F took part in the Apache Indian Expedition and, after several encounters, was sent in 1870 to Camp Grant, north of Tucson. The unit became a "flying squar," able to operate independently of other commands in the efforts against hostile Indians in Arizona Territory.

Cushing's last scout ended in 1871 in a battle against Apaches led by Juh, who had a hatred for the young officer after Troop F had attacked a Mescalero camp in the Guadalupe Mountains. Cushing was thirty-two years old at the time of his death.

This volume is the first in a proposed Frontier Forts and People series. It is a slim paperback similar to the Southwestern Studies Series of Texas Western Press. Its author, Kenneth Randall, moved from Pennsylvania to Tucson after retiring from a career in education and now devotes much of his time to researching and writing about the history of the Southwest.

NANCY HAMILTON  
El Paso

**THE PLACE NAMES OF NEW MEXICO** by Robert Julyan.  
Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996, \$39.00/  
\$19.95

For research, casual curiosity, or when driving through "The Land of Enchantment," you will find *The Place Names of New Mexico* to be a pleasant companion. The book lists more than 6,500 names explaining features of mountains, rivers, canyons, counties, towns, post offices, and ghost towns. It also provides current information about the location, history, present status and the derivation of the names of the places listed.

It is a fun read as well as a sound, quick guide to the state's geography and history. Eureka and Chance City, now abandoned, tell of dashed hopes of get-rich-quick mining camps, while

Nombre de Dios and Sangre de Cristo proclaim the religious faith of the early Spanish explorers. And names like Acoma and Chuska carry a reminder of civilizations that flourished in the region long before Columbus sailed.

And, if there is a lull in the party conversation, you might casually remark, "Did you know that Ojo del Perrillo, the spring of the little dog, got its name after a small dog with muddy paws wandered into the camp of Conquistador Juan Oñate? Seeing the mud, the thirsty explorers exulted knowing that life-saving spring water was nearby."

DOUGLAS V. MEED  
El Paso

**TEXIAN ILIAD: A MILITARY HISTORY OF THE TEXAS REVOLUTION** by Stephen L. Hardin. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1996, \$15.95

Texas, our Texas, was Northern Mexico until a series of events led to its becoming an independent republic in 1836, when its inhabitants became known as "Texians."

In 1839 a French visitor, Frederick Gaillardet, compared Texians to the mythical heroes of ancient Greece. Gaillardet described the Texas Revolution as a "Texian Iliad" similar to Homer's *Iliad*, which tells of events during the war between Troy and Greece circa 1300 B.C.

Inspired by Gaillardet's parallel, Stephen L. Hardin, a professor of history at Victoria College in Victoria, Texas, has written his well-researched history of the critical two years (1835-1836) when the Texians, most of whom had colonized under entrepreneurs Moses Austin and his son Stephen F., grew increasingly discontented and began to demand their independence from Mexico and its dictator, Antonio López de Santa Anna. Beginning with the Battle of Concepción on October 28, 1835, and concluding with the Texians' victory on April 21, 1836 at San Jacinto, the fate and future of Texas was determined. Despite battle defeats on March 6, 1836 at the Alamo, and again on March 27 at Goliad, the Texians won the war of independence at San Jacinto in one of the world's decisive battles.

Drawing on many original Texan and Mexican sources and on-site inspections of the major battlefields, Hardin describes the strategy and tactics of each side—and offers several reasons why the Texians emerged victorious: the tenacity of the tough Texians (Austin, Houston, Burleson, Milam, Bowie, Travis, Crockett, Burnet, Seguin, Sherman, Lamar, and their volunteer comrades) plus critical mistakes by the Mexicans, winter weather, and luck when

odds were slim.

*Texan Iliad* was originally published in 1994 and now is being reissued in paperback. It won the Texas Historical Commission 1994 T. R. Fehrenbach Book Award, as well as a Summerfield G. Roberts Award from the Sons of the Republic of Texas and a certificate of commendation from the American Association for State and Local History. Greatly deserving of these honors, the book also deserves wide readership for its unbiased account of the narrow edge possessed by the Texians in their bold bid for independence from Mexico.

A truce between the Greeks and Trojans ended Homer's *Iliad*.

Withdrawal of the Mexican Army across the Rio Grande ended the Texian *Iliad*.

EVAN HAYWOOD ANTONE  
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**TRIGGEROMETRY: A GALLERY OF GUNFIGHTERS** by Eugene Cunningham with a Foreword by Eugene Manlove Rhodes and a New Introduction by Joseph G. Rosa. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1996, \$18.95

Very welcome is this new edition of a long out-of-print book that has a special connection with El Paso. Written and published in the 1930's when its author, Eugene Cunningham was living in El Paso, *Triggerometry: A Gallery of Gunfighters* is described by the University of Oklahoma Press as a "now classic volume." Which maybe it is—if for no other reason than its final chapter, an engaging discussion (with diagrams) of the varied ways in which the masters of the deadly craft manipulated their pistols: the "road-agent's spin," and "pin-wheeling."

Not quite so impressive, but definitely worth a visit (or revisit), is Cunningham's "gallery," which displays his biographical sketches of some eighteen "classic" gunfighters—including Butch Cassidy, Billy the Kid, Wild Bill Hickok, Sam Bass, and such "El Paso" practitioners as John Wesley Hardin and Dallas Stoudenmire. And everybody will enjoy the original Foreword by Western novelist Eugene Manlove Rhodes. This Foreword, written shortly before Rhodes' death in 1934, gives the reader a personal welcome into that tumultuous frontier world so familiar to Rhodes and so accurately imaged in his many fictional works.

Added attractions come in the form of an updated bibliography and an extensive Introduction by Joseph C. Rosa, a close student of the gunfighter phenomenon and the author of several books on the subject. In this Introduction, Rosa presents new

information on several members of Cunningham's "gallery," details the types of pistols and holsters in popular use at the time, and offers his own analysis of the qualities of a deadly gunfighter.

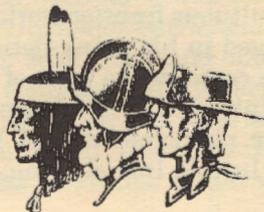
Altogether, these three voices (Cunningham's, Rhodes', and Rosa's)—speaking collectively over a time span of one hundred years and more—provide an interestingly "balanced" interpretation of the violence and disorder that characterized much of America's westward movement in the latter decades of the nineteenth century

*Triggernometry* may or may not be a "classic." But one thing is sure: this new edition has lots of class.

LILLIAN COLLINGWOOD  
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The ninth edition of the Encyclopedia Britannica (1893) carried an entry which reveals that the distinguished publication was capable of both error and condescension:

EL PASO, or EL PASO DEL NORTE, a town of Mexico, in the state of Chihuahua, situated on the Rio Grande, in a narrow valley near the frontier of New Mexico, 340 miles W. S. W. of Santa Fe.... The name is often applied to a whole group of small settlements on the Rio Grande, but belongs properly to the largest of their number, which owes its origin to the establishment of a military post. It is situated in the chief thoroughfare between New Mexico and Chihuahua. The town is a mere collection of brick huts without windows, and with earthen floors. In the district the vine is largely cultivated, and wine and brandy are manufactured. On account of the fertility of the soil the inhabitants enjoy an abundance of material luxuries, but they are totally ignorant of most of the appliances of civilized life. The population is about 6000.



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