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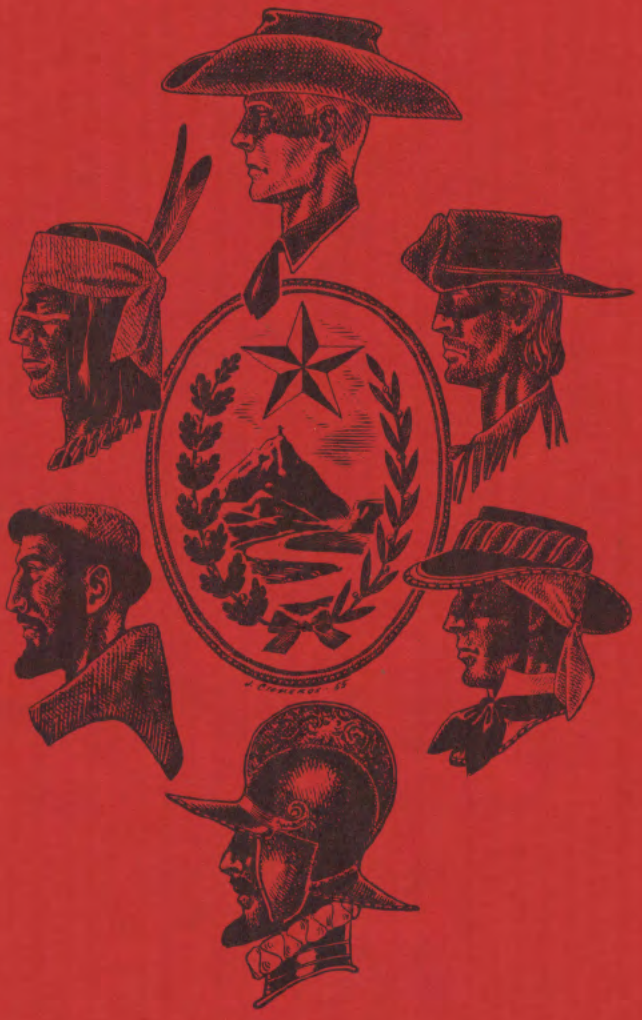

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*El Paso Street Scenes, 1880–1900. San Jacinto Plaza, left to right: Plaza Dining Room, Old Mexico Trading Co., U.S. Court House, Sheldon Hotel. Foreground: Alligator pond, bandstand. Photo courtesy El Paso County Historical Society.*



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# John Potts of Chihuahua

## By R. B. Brown

Although a number of foreign travelers who passed through the City of Chihuahua near the middle of the nineteenth century mentioned that John Potts was a very important person, very little is known about him beyond the fact that he held the concession for the mint in Chihuahua from about 1840 to 1860. All identified him as an Englishman and generally noted that he was "quite a scientific and obliging gentleman" (Wislizenus 1848, p. 50). Regarding his family or personal background, there are only brief and occasional mentions of a brother and a solitary mention of his unnamed wife and her sister, Miss Meadows, who were described as "quite lively, play on the harp and piano, and make the time of their visitors pass agreeably" (Magoffin 1962, pp. 229-230). Susan Magoffin and M. Rondé mentioned that he was in Chihuahua in February of 1847 and in the spring of 1849 respectively (Magoffin 1962 and Rondé 1861).

In addition to sending to England shipments of plants "almost annually" (Scheer 1856, p. 285) to Frederick Scheer, between 1842 to 1849, it seems that John Potts personally delivered a large collection of plants in 1850 (Scheer 1856). Regretfully, most of these plants seem to have been lost. A handful of letters in the Directors Correspondence Series at Kew suggests that the relationship continued through 1856 and 1857.

Exactly which plants John Potts sent or brought from Mexico is not known since many cacti were lost when Scheer moved from Kew to Kent (Walker 1994). Generally the herbarium sheets that may be attributable to Potts are incomplete and do not mention a location more precise than "northern Mexico" (Taylor, personal communication). It is evident that Scheer shared his specimens with the German taxonomist, Prince Salm-Dyck (Britton and Rose 1963), but John Potts' lasting contribution is his name as a

specific for *Opuntia pottsii* Salm-Dyck, *Thelocactus pottsii* Salm-Dyck, (a.k.a. *Echinocactus pottsii* Salm-Dyck), *Neomammillaria pottsii* Scheer, (a.k.a. *Mammillaria pottsii* Salm-Dyck or *Cactus pottsii* Kuntze) and *Peniocereus greggii* Engelmann, (a.k.a. *Cereus pottsii* Salm-Dyck), cactii variously found between New Mexico and Zacatecas (Britton and Rose 1963).

**John Potts and Friends:**

Historically, Chihuahua was important as a mining center on the Camino Real linking central Mexico with New Mexico. After Mexican independence from Spain, the restrictions of colonial trade were abolished and the nature of the trade along the Camino Real changed as commerce grew between Santa Fe and the nascent United States. North American and European goods flowed south and bullion flowed north. Much of this trade was occasional, but, by the end of the 1840's, a number of foreigners—mainly French and American—had established themselves as principal players in mining and commerce.

*During the American intervention of 1846–1848, it would seem that Potts' status as a neutral and the confidence he inspired put him in a position that allowed him to help members of both factions.*

One figure continually mentioned is John Potts, the Englishman who held the concession for the mint. During the American intervention of 1846–1848, it would seem that Potts' status as a neutral and the confidence he inspired put him in a position that allowed him to help members of both factions.

Albert Speyer, a Prussian trader, brought his caravan into Santa Fe and Chihuahua ahead of the invading American troops. After depositing a shipment of arms with Governor Manuel Armijo in Santa Fe, Speyer led his caravan south with the intention of selling his merchandise ahead of the American troops. Traveling with him were Adolphus Wislizenus (1848), a Swiss doctor looking for fun and adventure, and James Josiah Webb (1991), an American trader, both of whom met Potts in Chihuahua and had reason to be grateful for his assistance.

Just south of El Carrizal, Wislizenus decided to go ahead of Speyer and his caravan; he arrived in Chihuahua ten or fifteen days ahead of the traders (Webb 1991). By the sixth of September,

1846, six American merchants, identified as Messervy, East, Wethered, Stevenson, Douglas and Litzleiter had negotiated safe passage, and they left for Cusihuiriachi under military escort. Unfortunately and unintentionally, Wislizenus had created an unfavorable situation for himself. He believed that his Swiss passport would protect him, but after a few days he decided that it was time for him to leave. He tried to reclaim his passport, but it had been impounded and he had to stay in the City of Chihuahua. Upset by the turn of events, he decided to make his escape as best he could. Wislizenus probably went to Potts to ask for advice and assistance, as Potts later spoke with Governor Angel Trias on his behalf. Wislizenus gratefully accepted the resultant pass that allowed him to join the other internees at Cusihuiriachi "under the same conditions...with an additional clause to abstain from all correspondence injurious to the interest of the state of Chihuahua" (Wislizenus 1848, p. 50). Wislizenus left Chihuahua on the night of September 11, 1846 and covered the intervening one hundred miles in two days.

*Unfortunately and unintentionally, Wislizenus had created an unfavorable situation for himself. He believed that his Swiss passport would protect him, but after a few days he decided that it was time for him to leave.*

Meanwhile Speyer and his caravan were taken prisoner about fifty miles north of Chihuahua at Encinillas and marched to the edge of the city where they were detained for fifteen days on the northern bank of the Rio Chuvisca. Then they were marched through town and held in the bull ring on the south side of town for another fifteen days.

During this period Speyer entertained the local authorities and at least some of the other detainees were able to wander about town. James Josiah Webb (1991, p. 211-212) wrote:

> *One day I called on Mr. John Potts, an Englishman and director of the mint, and a man of a good deal of influence, and who seemed to be well posted in regard to the intentions of the governor towards us. He seemed to understand the difficulties under which I labored, and expressed himself as willing to do anything in his power by advise [sic] or influence to promote my interest. One*

*day he told me that he thought perhaps he had a document which I might be able to use to advantage. Mr. J. Tilghman Hoffman, of Baltimore, had crossed the plains in the same train with us the year before and proceeded to Chihuahua. On leaving, he requested Mr. Potts to procure a letter of security or him, as he expected to go out again and wanted to travel through the country to the Fair of San Juan and the City of Mexico, and leave by way of Vera Cruz. He produced the paper, and it was complete in all respects except the filling in of the personal description and the signature. Mr. Hoffman was a small and feeble man [of a] dark complexion, and between us [Potts and Webb] the fact that I should attempt to palm myself off for him, was exceedingly ridiculous. But the Mexicans did not know either of us, and I did not propose to assume Mr. Hoffman's position either abroad or at home. But in great difficulty, I decided to use his paper hoping that I might be benefitted, and he in no way wronged. So we filled in my personal description instead of his, and I placed the signature J. Josiah Webb, scrawled as near as I could to appear like the name J. Tilghman Hoffinan, in the body of the paper, which I never used but once, and then with all the benefit I could desire or expect.*

Although Webb does not mention the circumstances in which he used the pass, he continued south to the Fair at San Juan de Los Lagos before turning around and heading north again.

Even after Speyer's caravan left, a small number of American traders, probably including Frank McManus, James Aull and Henry Connelly, remained in Chihuahua through the winter. However,

*About ten days before the battle of Sacramento, fought about fifteen miles north of Chihuahua, Governor [Angel] Trias made an order sending all Americans seventy miles south of the town. About ten of them succeeded in evading this order by keeping themselves pretty much concealed. At the suggestion of the English consul, Mr. Potts, they took refuge at the Mint while the battle was in progress. They took with them arms and a large quantity of ammunition to the roof of that building for protection in case of*

> *attack by the mob, which they felt sure would follow American defeat.* (Drumm 1962, pp. 4-5)

However, Doniphan and the Missouri volunteers were victorious and, "Governor Trias and his retreating army galloped back *to the city and, scarcely halting for refreshment, sped on to Parral" (Moorhead 1975, p. 176). "The next day the American flag floated* from the flagstaff on the Plaza and Frank McManus and his friend Doctor Connelly reopened their respective stores and proceeded to sell their goods." (Drumm 1962, p. 4-5).

As the Mexican forces retreated, General Trias asked Potts to intercede on his behalf in order to protect Trias' personal property.

> *When Colonel David D. Mitchell arrived in Chihuahua he was directed to make search of all the principal houses for contraband of war. On March 4, 1847, he reached the residence of Governor Trias, who had deserted the city. Finding it locked he called for the key. Mr. Potts came forward and stated that the governor had left the house and its contents in his charge, and that neither Colonel Mitchell nor anyone else should enter it. He contended that it was under the British flag, and any violation would be reported to his government. Colonel Mitchell replied that he must go in; and that he had a key that would open the door. He sent his sergeant for two howitzers, which he referred to as his key, lit a match and was advancing, when the Englishman begged him not to fire as his brother was in the house. He then surrendered the key to Colonel Mitchell. An examination of the house was made and nothing but private property was found, which was respected."* (Drumm 1962, pp. 229-230)

Subsequently, when Doniphan and his troops decided to leave Chihuahua toward the end of April 1847,

> *Samuel Magoffin, having still on hand some 311 bales of his brother's goods, sold them to the Englishman John Potts at a sacrifice, for half of their freight costs and a guarantee against further customs charges. As soon as the American troops had left the city, the Mexican authorities called upon Potts to pay $15,698.96 in duties on these goods, and after his release from Durango, James*

*Magoffin had to repay him this amount."*[1] (Moorhead 1975, pp. 179-180)

Potts continued to play a prominent role, and when James Aull was murdered on June 23, 1847, Potts was named as one of the trustees *(albaceas)* of the estate along with Edward Glasgow and some as yet unidentified Mexican citizens (Moorhead 1975). The last traveler to locate Potts in Chihuahua is a Frenchman by the name of Rondé, who visited Chihuahua in 1849 (Rondé 1861).

## John Potts and the Mint:

In response to a *Real Orden,* or royal order, dated August 26, 1780 Coronel Teodoro de Croix, the Comandante General de las Provincias Internas, set about establishing a mint in Chihuahua, or San Felipe de Chihuahua as it was then known, issuing the appropriate instructions in August of 1782. However, soon thereafter, de Croix left northern Mexico to take up the post of viceroy in Peru, and it was not until 1811 that a mint functioned in Chihuahua. From 1811 to 1814 the Chihuahua mint coined $3,603,660 pesos. Subsequent production was quite erratic but averaged throughout the nineteenth century in excess of a million pesos a year (Almada 1968).

*Subsequent production was quite erratic but averaged throughout the nineteenth century in excess of a million pesos a year.*

As of 1834 the mint was an ongoing concern, although not to everyone's satisfaction. On October 7, Luis Zuloaga, in the name of the state government, placed a notice in the local newspaper, *El Fanal de Chihuahua,*[2] soliciting candidates to run the Mint and the mines at Jesús Maria and Hidalgo. In the next issue, on Tuesday, October 21st, it was announced that Bernardo Revilla had won the contract since he was the only postulator. José Joaquin Calvo, Governor of the State, and Luis Zuloaga, First Official, signed the contract for the state. Barely a month later, both Calvo and Zuloaga complained about the introduction of coins from the neighboring state of Durango, and in an attempt to shore up the Chihuahua mint, ordered that such coins be sent to the mint for resealing or reminting.

Criticism of the Mint continued. At the beginning of 1835, an unnamed legislator who claimed responsibility for its creation[3]

complained that the Mint had introduced 30,000 copper pesos to the overall detriment of the local economy. He claimed that such a large infusion of circulating money had forced prices to rise by 25% or 30%, created a 6% discount of copper as opposed to silver coins, a general scarcity of goods, and a reduction in economic activity. The unnamed critic also complained that this quantity was introduced to satisfy the monetary policy of the state rather than the actual needs of circulation or to improve the manufacturing capability of the Mint. Although these criticism are common concerning a prebanking system lacking a bureaucratic apparatus designed to control the monetary flow, the legislator's comments sound harsh and self-serving. The problem seems to be the result of poor planning and coordination.

*The unnamed critic also complained that this quantity was introduced to satisfy the monetary policy of the state rather than the actual needs of circulation or to improve the manufacturing capability of the Mint.*

In April an official newspaper appeared,[4] and at least through the end of 1837, published a monthly accounting of the activities of the mint usually signed by Juan de Dios Ceballos and José Joaquin Parejo, for the concessionaires, and Calvo and Zuloaga for the state.

The local newspaper of November 10, 1940 and November 17, 1840, carried an announcement: "The entrepreneurs of the Mint of this capital city have the satisfaction to announce to those interested that as of the 18th instant, they will begin to receive purified silver." Although there is no signature to this announcement, it may be the first indication that Mr. Potts and colleagues have taken over the mint.

According to a description in 1849,

> *The mint, is located on the street of that name which opens on to the Plaza of the Constitution [and] is an ordinary building only distinguished by its proportions. It cost 24,000 "strong" pesos. Inside gold, silver and copper money is coined . . . . It is administered by two intelligent Englishmen, the Potts brothers. The vast subterranean workshop is driven by steam. Mobil cranes assure that the work is quick and efficient. In six months*

*the directors have coined 206,539 silver pesos and the equivalent of 6,992 pesos in copper coin. One of our drawings represents a workshop where there are three ovens. The middle one is for melting silver. Two men permanently watch this vast furnace and when the ore has turned liquid, they pour it into a four handled casting ladle which is taken to the scale by two men. The scale can be moved on four small wheels: it can be pushed to the oven that can be seen at the back to the left and the liquid pours into the furnace of the second oven which allows for the separation of the ore.*

*Before taking his silver ore to the Mint, the miner tries to recover all the gold, but since the miners ovens leave something to be desired, the bars that they send to the Mint still hold a fair quantity of gold, and when this silver is taken to Europe, whether it is London or Paris, and processed again, the gold that is subsequently recovered, more than pays for this final operation* (Rondé 1963, p. 314).

Although yearly production was quite erratic, between 1844 and 1888, the mint produced the better part of $58,000,000 in silver and gold coins (Almada 1968).

## John Potts and Frederick Scheer:

According to a small handful of letters available[5] in the Directors Correspondence Series of the Herbarium and Archive at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, Frederick Scheer, a devotee of Kew Gardens that championed for its development in the 1840s, "had one of the largest collections of cactii in Europe...(and) wrote up the cactaceae for the Flora of North-Western Mexico...principally on material collected by Mr. John Potts, friend for thirty years and manager of the mint at Chihuahua."

As Scheer (1856) explains

*Ever since 1842, Mr. Potts has sent me plants almost annually; these were found either by himself, about the city of Chihuahua, or on short excursions from thence, or by his brother, the late Mr. Frederick Potts (sic), who resided chiefly on the borders of the state of Sonora. The difficulties which these gentlemen had to contend*

> *with were not small—personal danger from the Comanches and other tribes of Indians to whoever ventures beyond the immediate precincts of towns or haciendas being of constant occurrence. The trouble forwarding what had been collected was considerable. Much was lost before an opportunity to dispatch packages offered; some of these were six months or more on their way to England; some never reached their destination* (Walker 1994, p. 78 and 79).

Evidently, over the same period, Potts built up a large collection that he brought back in 1850 (Scheer 1856 and Lindsay 1944) of which "Scheer makes the interesting observation that 'Mr. Potts brought me, in 1850, two large plants, 2½ feet high and 1½ feet thick, weighing each upwards of 200 lbs. I calculate that the spines on each plant had to be at least 8300.' " Walker identified these plants as *Echinocereus Wislizenus*. (Walker 1994, p. 79)

## Conclusion:

It would seem that the majority of the material Potts provided did not survive when Scheer moved from Kew Green to Old Broadstreet, in the late 1840's. Potts' most enduring contribution, like many expatriates (i.e. Wislizenus) who visited far-off lands during the Industrial Revolution, may be that of their name as a specific for plants which they had found or which friends may have identified. Today, all signs of the mint have disappeared.

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1. Moorhead's (1975, pp. 179-180) source is a notarized deposition made on October 1, 1848 in Chihuahua and said to be found in the Magoffin Papers, Magoffin Home, State Historical Park, El Paso, Texas.

2. Periodico Oficial de Chihuahua, 1st de diciembre de 1829 – 14th, abril de 1842, microfilm. Sala Chihuahua, Centro de Información y Documentación del Estado de Chihuahua, Chihuahua, Chihuahua.

3. *El Fanal de Chihuahua,* tomo 1, nfim. 15, p. 59. martes 13th de enero de 1835, microfilm. Sala Chihuahua, Centro de Información y Documentación del Estado de Chihuahua, Chihuahua, Chihuahua.

4. *El Noncioso de Chihuahua,* (underlining is the Author's) in Periodico Oficial de Chihuahua, 1st de diciembre de 1829 – 14th abril de 1842, microfilm. Sala Chihuahua, Centro de Información y Documentación del Estado de Chihuahua, Chihuahua, Chihuahua.

5. These letters were located with the most gracious assistance of Leslie Price, Archivist at Kew.

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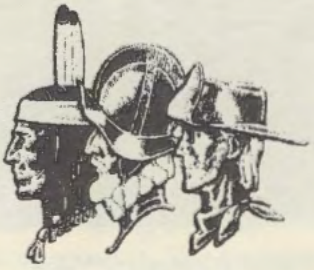
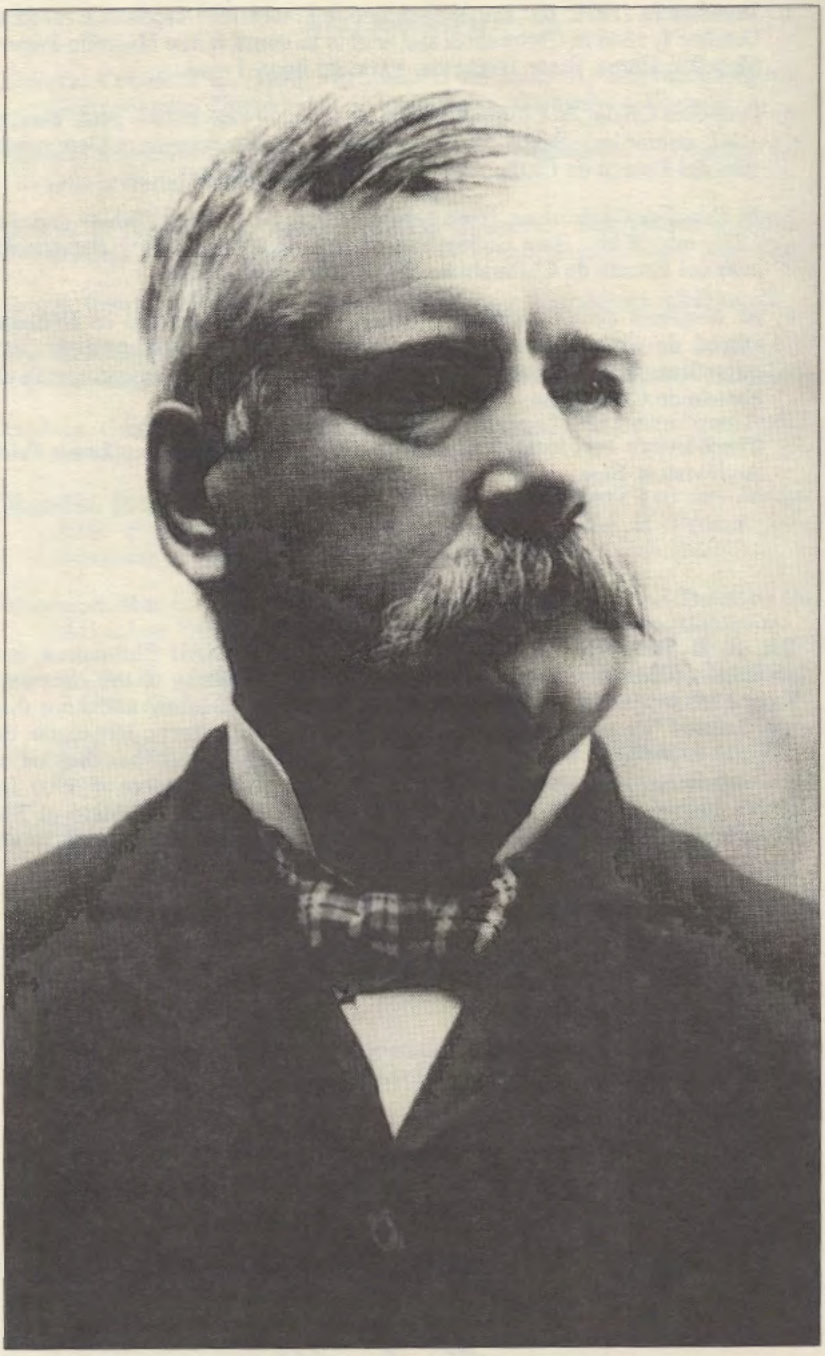
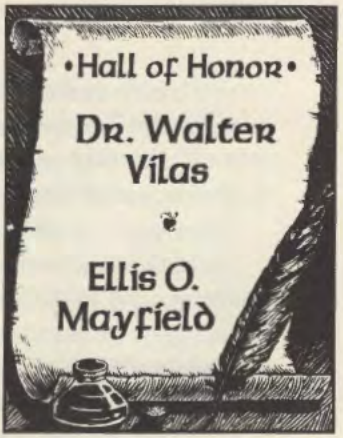




*Dr. Walter Nathaniel Vilas · 1847 – 1929*
*Photo courtesy El Paso County Historical Society*




# Tribute to Dr. Walter Vilas

## By Patrick Rand

Walter Nathaniel Vilas was born on September 11, 1847 in Red Creek, Wayne County, New York, about 10 miles south of Lake Ontario. He was one of seven children of Dr. Calvin Vilas and Mary Catherine Ford. The family moved from New York to Wisconsin in 1848 when Vilas was one year old and from there to Lake City, Minnesota when he was ten. On August 23, 1863, at age sixteen, he enlisted in Company E, 11th Minnesota Volunteer Infantry and served until the end of the Civil War, achieving the rank of corporal.

He married Mary Ramsdell on February 7, 1868 and the couple had three children: Catherine, who married Joe Hixon of Fresno, California; Florence who married Dr. Herbert Stevenson, later to be associated with Dr. Vilas; and Walter, who followed his father into the medical profession.

Vilas attended Rush Medical College in Chicago, which is now a part of the University of Chicago, graduating in the class of 1879. He began his medical practice in Rochester, Minnesota where he became a lifetime friend of Dr. William Mayo, father of the famous Mayo Brothers, who set up their world renowned clinic there.

He came to Ysleta, the county seat, in June of 1881, as assistant customs collector and also set up a medical practice. He moved to El Paso when it became the county seat in 1883. The Vilas family first lived on the corner of Rio Grande and Stanton streets, across from the former Hotel Dieu Hospital. Later they moved to the corner of Oregon and Wyoming streets.

He became deeply involved in the activities of the medical profession of El Paso, serving over the years in the capacity of

both city and county physician. For his services, the county paid him the handsome sum of $50.00 per month.

He was president of the El Paso Medical Society in 1903, president of the El Paso Board of Health and was elected secretary-treasurer of the American Anti-Tuberculosis League. He also held the position of surgeon for both the Mexican Central and the Santa Fe Railroads. For many years he was chief of staff and surgeon at Hotel Dieu Hospital. In these various positions, he was involved in many interesting activities. He is credited with giving the first diphtheria shots in El Paso and also with performing the first appendectomy in this area, at a time when it was thought the maximum life span without an appendix was only five years.

As president of the Board of Health, one of his duties was to inspect the heating and ventilating systems of schools. He began the inspection of milk and diligently enforced other pure food laws. When gunslinger John Wesley Hardin was shot by John Selman, Vilas was one of the physicians assigned to perform the autopsy, which reported that Hardin had been shot in the back.

Dr. Vilas was described as a stocky, handsome man of compelling personality, who left no doubt as to what he meant, and on occasion was known to use profanity to make a point. On one occasion, Dr. Vilas was being admonished by the administrator of Hotel Dieu Hospital for his swearing. He answered, "You are right, Sister. I shouldn't swear but, damn it, something has to be done about those damned nurses!"

Dr. Vilas was involved in many of the city's social and civic activities. In 1891, he was nominated for the office of mayor by the Republican party, but was defeated by the Democratic candidate, Richard Caples, by the margin of 735 votes to 596. He was commissioned by Texas Governor Culberson as a major and surgeon for the first Texas Volunteer Infantry in the Spanish-American War, and served for a six month period. Upon his return to El Paso, he was asked to help obtain a charter for the Humane Society. This was understandable since, according to his family, he was quite fond of animals and had a number of pets, including a three-legged frog.

He was also a charter member of the Pioneers Association of El Paso, which was formed in 1904.

The interest aroused by his inspections of schools as president of the Board of Health, lead to the election of Dr. Vilas to the School Board, where he served from 1904 until 1909. He held

the office of president of the Board from September of 1907 until April of 1909. During this time he insisted that all teachers be examined for TB so it couldn't be passed on to the children. He also demanded that all school doors swing out in case of fire, which is now a recognized regulation in all building codes.

While he was president of the School Board, Dr. Vilas pushed for a new school in Mundy Heights, which was growing rapidly. At the September 1, 1908 meeting, five different sets of plans for the new building were submitted and a committee was appointed to review and select one. The final set of drawings, by Architects Trost and Trost, was selected at the September 16th meeting, together with a statement that the building be constructed with the $25,000 budget set aside by the Board. A contract was drawn up with Thomas R. Francis Construction Company to build the new school, and the building was completed that Spring. It had been voted at the October 10th meeting to name the new school Vilas, in honor of the Board President. After his retirement to California, it was decided that a portrait of Dr. Vilas should be placed in the new facility, where it remains to this day.

In 1909, Dr. Vilas retired from his medical practice and moved to California. Although he was too old to enter the service in World War I, he served his country as president of the Stockton Draft Board until the end of the war. Dr. Vilas passed away in California at the age of 81 in 1929 and is buried with his family in Evergreen Cemetery in El Paso.

Because of his dedication to his profession and the higher elements of El Paso's Society, Dr. Vilas might not be as well known as some of the notorious gunslingers and madams that made up a part of El Paso's early scene, but it was Dr. Vilas and others like him that set the pattern for the leaders of our City today.

*Ellis Oglesby Mayfield*
*Photo courtesy El Paso County Historical Society*

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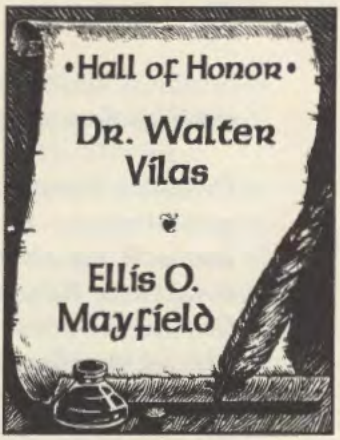



# Tribute to Ellis O. Mayfield

## By Frank McKnight

Ellis Oglesby Mayfield was born in El Paso, Texas on August 10, 1915, the son of J. Davis and Anna Grace Ellis Mayfield. He attended Crockett Elementary School and graduated from Austin High School, took his pre-law at Texas College of Mines and Metallurgy, now the University of Texas at El Paso, and was graduated from the School of Law, University of Texas at Austin, in 1939. Ellis was actively engaged in the practice of law in El Paso for over fifty-five years, which was interrupted only by two periods of service in the United States Army. During World War II he enlisted as a private and served with the 29th Infantry Division in Europe for three years. Discharged with the rank of captain, he was recalled to active duty during the Korean War and served on the staff of the United States Army Intelligence Center.

In 1946, Ellis was selected as El Paso's Outstanding Young Man by the Junior Chamber of Commerce, primarily for his efforts as chairman of the Mayor's Citizens Committee for the depression of the railroad tracks through downtown El Paso, which resulted in the construction of the Bataan Memorial Trainway.

Ellis was a founding partner in the law firm of Mayfield and Perrenot. He s a Sustaining Life Fellow of the Texas Bar Foundation and a member of the State Bar of Texas, the American Bar Association, and the El Paso Bar Association, where he served as chairman of the board and its president in 1960.

Ellis is a longtime member of the El Paso Chamber of Commerce and served that organization as president in 1962, and currently serves as a member of the Chairman's Council. He became a director of the First City National Bank in 1959 and

continued serving as a director or honorary director until the bank was dissolved in 1991.

In 1977, Ellis was elected president of the El Paso Symphony Orchestra Association and he served on the board of directors for several years. He has also been president of the board of governors of the El Paso Country Club and the Downtown Touchdown Club. He is a former director of the YMCA, Family Welfare, Community Chest, Planned Parenthood Center, Community Council, and the Cancer Society, for which he was chairman of the Cancer Crusade. He also served as director and board member of the El Paso Industrial Development Corporation, Crime Stoppers, Hospice of El Paso, Inc., Southwest General Hospital, the Advisory Board of the El Paso Community Foundation, and the El Paso Cancer Treatment Center. He has chaired the city's Intergovernmental Relations Board. In 1998 he was chairman of the Professional Division of the United Way Campaign and received the United Way Community Volunteer of the Year award in 1989.

For more than seven years, following his appointment by the mayor and the city council, Ellis was a member and later vice-chairman of the Public Service Board of El Paso. In addition to giving a great deal of time to the business and the meetings of the Public Service Board, he spoke about El Paso's water problems, the potential solutions and conservation of this vital resource to more than thirty civic groups.

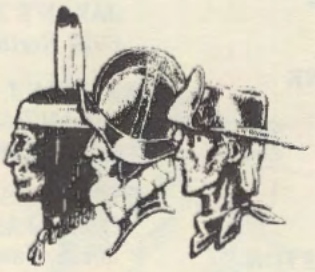
A great supporter of the University of Texas at El Paso, Ellis has chaired the President's Associates, is a longtime member of the Matrix Society, and is now a member of the Development Board of the University of Texas at El Paso. He is also a member of the executive committee of the Chancellor's Council of the University of Texas System and a member of the Board of Visitors of the McDonald Observatory. In 1986, Ellis was named Outstanding Ex-Student of University of Texas at El Paso, and in 1988 he served as the first president of the Library Association. He and his wife are the donors of the Ellis and Susan Mayfield endowed chair in the College of Business at the University of Texas at El Paso. Presently he is active in the University's Legacy Campaign.

Ellis and his family are lifetime members of the Church of Saint Clements, having served three terms as senior warden. For over twenty years he has been an active lay reader, and from

1976 until 1989 he served as chancellor of the Episcopal Diocese of the Rio Grande. He was an original incorporator and trustee of St. Clement's Parish School.

Ellis has frequently been a speaker at civic and service clubs and in 1974 received a Freedom Foundation Award for a Fourth of July talk he gave to the Downtown Kiwanis Club. The text of this talk was later printed in the Congressional Record. In 1963 he was honored as the outstanding ex-student at Austin High School and in 1986 he was recipient of the City of El Paso's Conquistador Award.

Ellis is married to the former Susan Neff Ballantyne. They have four children and ten grandchildren.



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# Johnny Gringo at the Pass of the North

## By John Porter Bloom

Johnny Gringo[1] was the "G.I. Joe" of the war between the United States and Mexico of 1846-1848; the father, brother, and ancestor of Johnny Reb and Billy Yank, as well as Johnny Doughboy. He visited the El Paso region in the van of the great influx of Anglo-American settlement that followed United States annexation of the vast empire stretching from the Sabine River to the Pacific Ocean. He observed the region as one era ended, with the eyes of the men of the new era. His observations are therefore of peculiar interest and importance to his successors.

The main outlines of United States military activities in the Mexican War are traced in many places, and it need be mentioned here only that El Paso del Norte, now Ciudad Juarez, experienced two main visitations by Johnny Gringo. The first was commanded by Colonel Alexander W. Doniphan and the second by Brigadier General Sterling Price. Doniphan's regiment of Missouri Mounted Volunteers moved down the Rio Grande into El Paso del Norte without opposition on December 27, 1846, after winning the Battle of Brazito on Christmas Day.[2] Doniphan was reinforced on February 1, 1847, by a battalion under Major Meriwether Lewis Clark, which included both light artillery and infantry. One week later the entire column marched for Chihuahua—less than one thousand soldiers, but accompanied by over three hundred wagons of traders with an undetermined number of drivers and sundry *employees who were to be helpful at the Battle of Sacramento*, near Chihuahua.

General Price may well have been jealous of the fame won by Doniphan. His men moved from New Mexico to begin a new occupation of El Paso del Norte in early November, 1847, with proper authorization. But Price did not have direct orders for the advance to Chihuahua on which he set out from El Paso del

Norte on March 1, 1848.[3] The victory which he won at Santa Cruz de Rosales, below Chihuahua, was not as notable as Doniphan's nor did Price march farther into Mexico. Instead of a triumphal advance, Price's men staged a very disorderly withdrawal through the Pass of the North to the United States in July. His force was about the same size as Doniphan's military force.[4]

Johnny Gringo liked El Paso del Norte. He had spent some time in New Mexico, suffering severe privations, and was wonderfully pleased in general with what he found here. Private Daniel H. Hastings described his reaction in some detail:

> I was much surprised to find so large and pleasant a city. The extreme neatness and regularity of the streets which are daily swept by females, the walks, beautifully ornamented by long rows of shape [sic] trees just resuming their green foliage at the foot of which were small streams of pure water, conducted by irrigation, the mildness and serenity of the climate, the sweet and renovating songs of happy birds...all so far surpassed my expectations...that in spite of our sorrows, I found myself almost happy.[5]

Not only the greenery and climate, but also the people seemed to be superior to those previously encountered. Two lieutenants remarked that there were many similarities between the natives here and in New Mexico; however, as one wrote,

> As a general thing the people [here] have more intelligence than exists in Santa Fe, and both men and women present a neater appearance and have more refinement.... A *fandango* given soon after we came in the place was generally attended by the officers, and I found it much more respectable than they are in New Mexico.

The women were all neatly dressed and some fine and presented as good an appearance as we usually have in "the States."[6]

The invaders set up housekeeping in various places during their stay in El Paso del Norte. The town's population was indeterminate, with no set boundaries, and settlements extending many miles down the river from the pass to San Elizario and beyond. Population estimates for El Paso del Norte ran from four to eight thousand at this time[7] Johnny Gringo sometimes camped out; Doniphan's "Chihuahua Rangers" located at first at a large corral

one mile from town, where wind and dust were very discomforting, Private John T. Hughes indicated that the bulk of Doniphan's men camped "on a bare spot of earth, south of the Plaza," suffering much before being moved into buildings in town, and the part of Price's command that arrived in February, 1848, just prior to marching for Chihuahua, "camped out near town."[7] But most of the men, most of the time, were quartered in various buildings near the plaza. Sergeant Frank S. Edwards' unit was quartered in the barracks building, which stood "on [a] small eminence in the rear of the church." Edwards was displeased because this building also contained the jail. It also included a public school, he wrote, but the children had a long vacation because he stored hay and fodder there. This unit was later located at San Elizario, often called simply "the Presidio," where there was "a large fort" which had a "pretty church" within its walls.[9]

The commissioned officers assumed advantages over their men in lodging as in other matters, taking quarters in private homes. Lieutenant Gibson, for instance, lived awhile with "Pedro Jacques," then with "the Frenchman," who offered the best accommodations in town—perhaps the little Frenchman mentioned by Hughes who operated the saloon on the southeast corner of the plaza.

Returning to New Mexico through El Paso del Norte in April, 1847, Gibson lodged at "the *casa* of Mrs. [Robert?] McKnight."[10] The winsome young bride, Susan Shelby Magoffin, who accompanied Doniphan's expedition, has left us the best description of a fine home in El Paso del Norte at this period, the home of the Magoffins' *gachupin* host, "Don Agapita....a man ever to be beloved, for his hospitable feelings." Gibson concurred with Susan on the comfortableness of the better residences, commenting particularly on the pleasant patios, "or corrals, as we called them, ornamented with flowers and evergreens, and fruit trees and shrubs, making a delightful place to sit at all seasons of the year."[11]

The pleasures of the patio-sitting were mild as compared to other pleasures pursued by Johnny Gringo, which included especially gambling, liquor, and sex. Games of chance became so numerous and popular that the player blocked passage through streets around the plaza on sunny days in January, 1847, and Doniphan had to prohibit gambling on the streets. Mexicans and invaders joined at games such as monté, chuck-a-luck, twenty-one, and faro.[12]

Liquor contributed not a little to the disorderliness associated with gambling. "Our boys are making desperate efforts to amuse themselves," wrote Private William H. Richardson in February, 1847, adding that, "among other things, our sutler is here... and whiskey is selling at 75 cents per pint. With some honorable exceptions, the scenes among officers and men may be much 'better imagined than described'." The scenes were enlivened not only by the sutler's whiskey but especially by the native wine, brandy *(aguardiente* or "Pass whiskey"), and also *mescal* and *pulque.* Sergeant Edwards reported, "The wine is of a dark-port color, of good quality, and cheap. The brandy has the appearance of gin, but with a pleasing flavor of its own." The latter damaged the health of several men by contamination from copper vessels in which it was manufactured, he alleged, but "the wine was harmless, being the pure juice of the grape."[13] A *Paseño* [native] who had a "wine cellar" may have though the wine harmless, but he found that Johnny Gringo's thirst was not. When a crowd of invaders got boisterous he attempted to shut them out, but they took his door off its hinges and cleaned him out![14]

Johnny Gringo was very interested in the feminine portion of the population of El Paso del Norte. Private Philip G. Ferguson, for instance, described the turn-out on a religious holiday in a manner that reveals much of himself as well as what he viewed:

> many of them were elegantly dressed, some of them in dresses made after the American fashion, with large sleeves, but all wearing the *rebozo,* or scarf, over their heads and shoulders, concealing their faces. I observed a gaily dressed senorita and her cavalier going to church on a pacing mule, the lady being seated sideways in the saddle, her feet and face to the right instead of the left side, while her gallant sat straddled behind her with his arms around her holding the reins. I could not see *the face of the lady, but judging from the brilliancy and* sweet expression of her dark, melting eye, peeping like a star through the folds of her rebozo, it must have been beautiful.

Lieutenant Gibson observed the ladies with a more sophisticated eye, and commented in particular on the sister of a Mexican miller with whom he was familiar:

> a pretty girl with dark eyes, black hair....a brunette complexion...a fine form and pretty hands and feet. Generally the women have small hands and tapering fingers, and altogether are superior in form to the American [women], probably because lacing and such things are unknown. I, of course, embraced her when she left according to the fashion of the country, and had no objection to repeat the ceremony at another visit.[15]

Two of Doniphan's men are alleged to have deserted before reaching Chihuahua to marry such *señoritas,* and three or four are said to have returned after the war to marry in El Paso del Norte.[16]

On a more earthly level were Lieutenant [Benjamin] Talbot and fellow officers of the 3rd Missouri Volunteers. Ferguson stated that seventy-two men of Talbot's company signed a petition against him, feeling themselves "disgraced" by his conduct in keeping a thirteen-year-old girl in his room. Apparently the girl's age was the primary concern of the men in this case, for Ferguson alleged, "It seems to be a general thing among the officers to have mistresses and some of them carry it so far as to keep two or three at the same time."[17]

Entirely aside from such goings-on were more innocent diversions such as "Animal Magnetism" and "O Hush," plays presented by the "Thespian society" in January, 1848. Doniphan's men had earlier instituted "mock-tryals by jury" with appropriate fines for soldiers guilty of the slightest misdemeanor—a form of fun which could be serious on occasion. And the seriousness of the situation told on the men. One, in fact, became deranged when he was informed that he was expected to march on to Chihuahua. He was buried at El Paso del Norte.[18]

Dysentery, measles, and scurvy were more common threats to Johnny Gringo's existence. Private Richardson's captain spoke at the burial of a fourth man of his command, at the Pass of the North, and warned his hearers:

> that it was wisdom for each and all to prepare for the worst," &c. The usual rounds were fired, and we covered poor Tolly over with soap-weed, and filled up the grave. After trampling the dirt and leveling the ground, we marched off....

Private M. B. Edwards spoke of the death of a comrade in arms and added, "Our hospital affairs are conducted scandalously. There is not a surgeon or steward who can much more than determine calomel from quinine...." He stated, considering the combination of psychological and physical factors, that "there was at one time talk of open mutiny."[19]

The respect Johnny Gringo felt for the dead caused him to be very critical of Paseño burial practices and, to some extent, of the religion associated therewith. [This was true everywhere in Mexico and New Mexico.] Private Ferguson described the cemetery at El Paso del Norte "with feelings of horror and disgust": bodies buried "without coffin or shroud" in narrow graves, left level with the surface and unmarked. Private Marcellus Ball Edwards saw a Mexican jump down on a rigid body in order to force it into a too-short grave. Sergeant Frank S. Edwards indited criticism that was characteristic of Johnny Gringo regarding the fat priest and the church at San Elizario. Entering the church alone, Edwards lifted up the veils which concealed the different figures in the niches around the walls; and, gazing on their gaudily dressed and painted saintships, I felt that any little girl at home would have been ashamed of such a badly dressed set of dolls.[20]

Nevertheless, it is clear that here, as elsewhere in Mexico, native priests ministered conscientiously to the spiritual needs of Roman Catholics in the invading forces.[21]

Misconduct on the part of officers, mentioned above, suggests the likelihood of bad behavior by the enlisted men, and it was so. Mexico was hard-used by Johnny Gringos who, as Susan Magoffin remarked, were "not careful at all how much they soil the property of a friend much less an enemy." Private Hastings was more forceful in describing the actions of some men returning from a *fandango* held about three miles from town. They were, he wrote, "so much intoxicated as to create a great deal of confusion, destroying property and committing other outrages which quite terrified the natives...scarcely a stone was left, the overturn of which could in the least discommode or damage the proprietor."[22] Some of the Paseños who had fled from town following the Battle of Brazito probably regretted later that they had returned.[23]

They and the invaders would have got on better, no doubt, had the food supply been more ample and more appealing to Johnny

Gringo. The quality of the flour and meat was more of a problem than the quantity, apparently. Local mills were crude and inefficient, and were taken over by the military. Johnny Gringo found Mexican beeves small in size, but often producers of excellent meat; the sheep, however, were "so poor that you could read through the sides, or it took two sheep to make a shadow." Other commodities were more or less seasonal, including fresh apples, peaches, pears, quinces, apricots, oranges and grapes, and dried grapes, apples, pears and peaches, and many vegetables including superior onions. The pumpkins were intended by the natives for pigs and servants, but were eagerly seized by Johnny Gringo.[24] The highly-seasoned prepared foods were mostly too hot for Johnny Gringo's pleasure. Private Ferguson, however, was given a concoction here which was not reported anywhere to the north, evidently a *tamale:* "a woman handed us something wrapped up in a wet corn shuck, and on unrolling it we found a kind of edible made of corn meal with pepper and meat in the center, like a dumpling, which had a pleasant taste."[25]

Of such varied experiences and observations as these, then, was Johnny Gringo's early visitation to the Pass of the North composed. Perhaps it was comparable to the tamale, with a goodly amount of pepper in it, but pleasant as a whole.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. The word *gringo* did not originate during the Mexican War, but this was the period when it became familiar to Anglo-Americans. Its origins are obscure. See Will M. Tipton "Note on Origin of the Word 'Gringo," *Old Santa Fé, 111 279.* "Johnny Gringo," as used here, refers not merely to enlisted men, who have left meager records, but to all who came with the Anglo-American invasion of *1846-1849.* Much of the research necessary for this paper was made possible by a grant from The Southern Fellowships Fund.
2. See George Ruhlen, "Brazito-The Only Battle in the Southwest between American and Foreign Troops," *Password, 11, 4-13,* and "The Battle of Brazito-Where Was It Fought?" ibid, 53-60.
3. Ralph P. Bieber, ea., *Marching with the Army of the West, 1846–1848, by Ahraham Robinson Johnston, Marcellus Ball Edwards* [and] *Philip Cooch Ferguson* (Glendale, 1936), 63-64.
4. Documentation on the Price expedition is scant as compared to material on the Doniphan expedition. No unpublished manuscript sources are known, except copies of official orders, etc., in the Adjutant General's Office papers in the National Archives, Washington, D.C. The published sources are: Elihu H. Shepard, *Autobiography* (St. Louis, *1869)* and Ferguson's

"Journal" in Bieber, ea., *Marching*. Price's force consisted of four companies of the 3d Missouri Mounted Volunteers, three companies of the Santa Fe Battalion [mounted volunteers], a volunteer light artillery company and two companies of the 1st United States Dragoons.

5. Pvt. D. H. Hastings, Personal account: "With Doniphan in Mexico," Feb. 2, *1847*, Justin Harvey Smith Papers, Vol. 15, Latin American Collection, University of Texas Library. An officer commented, "This is a beautiful and fertile place, well watered and abounding in fruit trees, vineyards and corn fields which render this settlement the richest part of upper Mexico..." Maj. M. L. Clark, Feb. 2, *1847*, to Gov. John C. Edwards, in "Letterbook of 'Extra Battalion' Missouri Light Artillery," Western American Collection, Yale University Library.

6. R.P. Bieber, ea., *Journal of a Soldier under Kearny and Doniphan, 1846-1847, by George Rutledge Gibson* (Glendale, 1935) 314. See also letter by Lt. Christian Kribben, Feb. 2, 1847, in *Daily Missouri Republican*, Apr. 9 1847, cited in 'Bieber, ea., *Gibson Journal*, p. 314n. New Mexicans need not be unduly distressed by Johnny Gringo's invidious comparisons. A forty-niner who had crossed Texas to the Pass of the North exclaimed, for example:: "almost like a Garden of Eden!" Mabelle Eppard Martin, ea., "From Texas to California in *1849;* Diary of C. C. Cox," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, XXIX, 130. Furthermore, to Johnny Gringo, the people of Chihuahua seemed superior to those of El Paso del Norte, although Josiah Gregg, who traveled extensively in northern Mexico, wrote of the Paseños that "take them altogether, [they] are more sober and industrious than those of any other part of Mexico I have visited; and are happily less infested by the extremes of wealth and poverty." Max L. Moorhead, ea., *Commerce of the Prairies, by Josiah Gregg* (Norman, Okla., 1954), 314.

7. Moorhead, ea., Greggs *Commerce*, p. 273; William H. Richardson *Journal of Doniphan's Expedition* (Columbia, Mo., reprinted from *The Missouri Historical Review, 1928),* 62; and Martin, ea., Cox Diary," *130.*

8. Richardson, *Journal*, p. 62; William E. Connelley, *Doniphan's Expedition and the Conquest of New Mexico and California...Includes a Reprint of the Work of Col. John T. Hughes* (Topeka, Kans ., 1907), 88, 382; Bieber, ea., Marching, 353.

9. F. S. Edwards, *A Campaign in New Mexico with Colonel Doniphan* (Philadelphia, 1847), 92, 99; Richardson, *Journal*, 67-68; see also Bieber, ed., *Marching, 339.*

10. Bieber, ea., *Gibson Journal*, 3 11, 315; Connelley, *Doniphan's Expedition*, p. 387n; G. R. Gibson, Journal, Apr. 16-17, 1847, typescript copy [of original in Missouri Historical Society Library] lent to the present writer by Prof. Ralph P. Bieber of Washington University, St. Louis.

11. Stella M. Drumm, ea., *Down the Santa Fe Trail and into Mexico,The Diary of Susan Shelby Magoffin, 1846-1847* (New Haven, 1926), 20506; Bieber, ea., Gibson journal, 313.

12. Connelley, *Doniphan's Expedition*, 92, 387.

13. Richardson, *Journal*, p. 68; Edwards, *Campaign*, p. 91. Hughes alone mentioned that beer was available at El Paso del Norte. Connelley, *Doniphan's Expedition*, p. 385. The wine was "very pleasant" and some-

what resembled Malaga wine, Gregg said, but one later skeptic reported it "like a mixture of Malaga and vinegar" while another called it mediocre, saying it caused severe headaches. Moorhead, ea., Gregg's Commerce, 273; Julius Froebel, *Seven Years' Travel in Central America, Northern Mexico, and the Far East of the United States* (London, 1854), 330; John Russell Bartlett, *Personal Narrative of Explorations and Incidents....* (2 vole., New York 1854), 1, 186.

14. Shepard, *Autobiography,* 158.
15. Bieber ea., *Marching,* p. 348; Bieber, ea., *Gibson Journal,* 316; see also Gibson, Journal, Apr. 9, 1847.
16. Connelley, *Doniphan's Expedition,* 397, 467n.
17. Bieber, ea., *Marching,* 342, 344, 349. No comparable charges were made against officers under Doniphan, but for statements on other forms of improper and unmilitary conduct by his officers, see Edwards, *Campaign,* 98; Connelley, *Doniphan's Expedition,* 97, 383n, 387n, 391.
18. Bieber, ea., Marching, 532; Connelley, *Doniphan's Expedition,* 92, 396n.
19. Richardson, *Journal,* 70; Bieber, ea., *Marching,* 241-42.
20. Bieber, ea., *Marching,* 341, 273; Edwards, *Campaign,* 99-101.
21. E.g., Fidelia Miller Puckett, "Ramon Ortiz: Priest and Patriot," *New Mexico Historical Review, XXV,* 281.
22. Drumm, ea., *Magoffin Diary,* 228-29; Hastings, Personal account, Feb. 28, 1847, Smith Papers.
23. Paseños were no doubt glad, however, to have Johnny Gringo occasionally engaged in fighting the Apaches who ravaged the whole district. Bieber, ea., *Marching,* 343-47; 350-51; Connelley, *Doniphan's Expedition,* 394.
24. Bieber ea., *Gibson Journal,* 323; Bieber, ed. *Marching 240;* Edwards, *Campaign, 96-97;* Connelley, *Doniphan's Expedition,* 390n, 385; Froebel, *Travel,* 330
25. Bieber, ea., *Marching,* 342-43

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EDITOR'S NOTE:
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# Eugene O. Porter Award

The Eugene O. Porter Award which was established in 1975 in memory of the first editor of *Password* will be awarded at the next quarterly meeting of the El Paso Historical Society. This award is made each year to the author of the outstanding article published during that year.

The award is financed by contributions to the Porter Memorial Award Fund. The selection is made by the associate editors of *Password*, James M. Day and Richard Field and the editorial board of the journal; J. Morgan Broaddus, Clinton Hartmann, Douglas Meed, Leon Metz, Mary Ann Plaut, Carol Price, and Claudia Rivers.

# An Old-Fashioned Christmas

## By Marilyn Gross

*Connie White talking to Mr. and Mrs. Peter deWetter. Photo courtesy Lee Vail.*

On December fourteenth, the Burges House Commission invited the members of the El Paso community to share with them an old-fashioned and delightful custom.

In 1898, Richard F. Burges invited friends and neighbors to "Come have a cup of Christmas cheer," and with his daughter, Jane Perrenot, hosted this event each year.

"Once invited, always invited, always welcomed" was the tacit invitation that brought friends to this festive gathering through the years.

This year's celebration, with Society President Frank Gorman at the helm, was under the direction of Lee Vail, chair of the Burges House Commission. Almost eight hundred guests streamed through Burges House partaking of the eggnog made from the recipe traditional in the family, finger sandwiches, and dainty

*Blayne Lorentzen, flautist; Michael Franklin at the piano with the musical group from the Socorro Schools. Photo courtesy Lee Vail.*

*Part of the Salon at Burges House. Photo courtesy Lee Vail.*

sweets. They were entertained with traditional Christmas music by a group from the Socorro Schools under the direction of Michael Franklin, as well as by Blayne Lorentzen, flautist, accompanied by Eileen Van Slyke.

The house was full of friends, new and old, who enjoyed the ambiance of a vanished era when life was more gentle and more charming. Adding to the pleasant atmosphere was the genial conversation of guests who shared pleasant memories of the Christmas receptions they had attended when they were guests of Richard Burges and Jane Perrenot in the years when the Burges House was their home.

This was a most engaging social event of the Christmas season and the Society hopes it will become an El Paso tradition.

*(at left, L-R) Walter Blake, Mr. and Mrs. Colbert Coldwell.*

*(at right, L-R) Frank Gorman standing between Dr. and Mrs. H. D. Garrett.*

*Photos courtesy Lee Vail.*

# Born in Old El Paso

## By Joe Maciel

"Look son, that's where you were born." My mother pointed to a long row of doors in a building the length of a city block in South El Paso. This conversation took place as I drove her and my father around the city in the middle of the year 1964, when the Southern Pacific Railroad had recently transferred me from Tucumcari, New Mexico.

With a gleam in her eyes and a smile on her face, my mother kept looking out the car window and kept reliving the memories of her past and her old neighborhood. She continued, telling me, "As you already know, *mi hijo* (my son), you were born on July 8, 1919, here in El Paso, right in that *vivienda* (dwelling place consisting of several living quarters). These *viviendas* still exist at the corner of Pera and Estrella Streets. She excitedly pointed to number 7, and said, "That's where you were born!" The dingy screen door had a ragged, soiled curtain covering the upper half. As we drove through the city, she told my wife and me, "You were born between 10 and 11 o'clock, on one hot El Paso night. The midwife, who helped me bring you into this world was an elderly lady whose name was Doña Justa. Her gray hair hung down to her waist and she always had her head covered with a dirty towel." My mother also mentioned that the midwife's right, dark green eye sparkled with joy, love, and benevolence for all of her expectant mothers. Her left eye was always covered with a black patch.

The elderly baby "deliverer" was known all over the *segundo barrio* (second ward) as being the "best" for the soon-to-be mothers in their hour of need. Everyone knew of Doña Justa because of her successful deliveries and because she always had a self-rolled cigarette between her lips. People could tell when she was around because of the strong odor of tobacco and cigarette smoke that came from her body and her clothes. My mother, even in her later years, had a good memory of several of the happenings of her early

life. She remembered many events, places, and changes in the city where she grew up and married. She told me that when I was two years old, my father, who worked for the El Paso and Southwestern Railroad, was transferred to Tucumcari, New Mexico. Southwestern was later bought by the Southern Pacific Railroad.

Each time my wife and I took her sightseeing, she gave us a vivid picture of what El Paso and its streets had looked like. She described this street and that either as being covered with cobble stones or "just plain dirt." Often she would point to a certain site and would say, "A stable used to be there." Or she would say, "Over there was a large dairy."

She told us about the fruit and vegetable men, the milkmen, the ice men, and different other vendors who used to cruise the streets in their horse or mule-drawn wagons. When we came to certain streets she would point to the tracks that still existed from the old electric trolley cars.

She told us about the colorful *tranvias* (trolleys) and their routes. She said they ran from the Plaza to Fort Bliss, then to east El Paso. The city limit to the east at that time was at Concordia Cemetery and close to the *segundo barrio* (second ward). Another trolley line also ran north on Piedras Street.

Riding along Paisano Drive, just east of downtown, she would say, "From over there, on," and she pointed as she spoke, "the Rio Bravo ran, not too far from the American side. On both sides of the river were all kinds of growth such as reeds, bamboo plants and other tall greenery. The *contrabandistas* (smugglers) used this natural cover to hide from the United States Border Patrol, while they crossed with their contraband." She went on to say too that often, in the middle of the night or in the early hours of the morning, they could hear shots as the officers and the violators challenged each other. We were shown the approximate location where she, her sister, her mother, and three brothers lived. At the time, that location was close to the river.

As we drove through downtown, she pointed to certain locations and told us of the theaters, or silent movie places that were in their hey-day in the early years of the century. Seeing the taxis in present day downtown she would recall that "In the old El Paso days there were model "T" Fords, which served as taxis. These were called "jitneys," and they cruised the narrow streets with their passengers." There were also, she said, some horse

drawn buggies and a few fancy carriages that transported the people of means.

I could remember from my youth some of the places that my mother described. Because my father worked for the railroad, we could ride the passenger train on a pass furnished to the employees by the railroad. We traveled from Tucumcari to El Paso to visit my paternal grandmother and other relatives at least once a year. I clearly remember the squalid living conditions in *"el Segundo Barrio"* where they lived. I remember the crowded, run-down *viviendas* occupied by people of "different" and questionable behavior. On wash day, my grandmother or aunts, had to keep a constant surveillance on the laundry which was hung outside. If it were not "watched," it would disappear.

Coming to visit in El Paso was not all dreaded or appalling. There were some moments of laughter and enjoyment. I can still remember the times when two of my young aunts took me to *La Plazita,* called *San Jacinto Plaza.* Looking at that whole city block in the middle of downtown as it is today, I can still see it as it was in my youth when it had a different appearance and atmosphere. In the middle of the square, it had a decorative, slightly elevated kiosk, which in Spanish is called *kiosko.* The plaza of those years was more similar to the plazas of Spain and Mexico.

For a moment let's go back to the old plazas. The Moors first brought plazas to Spain. The Spaniards then brought the tradition of the plaza to Mexico, where it became popular. In all the Mexican towns and cities, the plazas occupied a whole city block, like the plaza in El Paso.

Around the four sides of the plaza were vendor's stands from which were displayed and sold roasted peanuts, candies of different kinds, gardenias, flowers, ice cream and *basiladoras* (an interesting toy).

On Thursday and Sunday evenings, from six to ten o'clock, a band of six to eight musicians gathered inside the kiosk and played all kind of heart-throbbing and foot-stomping music: *corridos,* polkas, *boleros,* and many *canciones rancheras.* An extra wide sidewalk bordered the entire plaza which usually had three lanes marked all around. In the outer lanes, the boys and men walked in one direction. In the middle lane the ladies or young *señoritas* walked in the opposite direction, probably in rhythm with the music. Thus, males and females met face to face as they walked around and around, to the happy tempo.

Some of the "romeos" who walked in the outer lane, had in their possession the aforementioned *basiladora*. The *basilidora* was a small ball about two inches in diameter that was filled with sawdust and covered with decorative paper of all colors. It had short strips of paper attached all around. A long elastic band, about twenty-four inches long, was fastened to it. The *basiladora* was thrown and retracted like a yo-yo.

The plaza "Don Juans" would throw the *basiladora* and tap their preferred or admired lady as she went by. As the music continued, everyone kept walking. If the young men were lucky, the girls who were tapped would give a big smile of approval and finally they would agree to walk beside the lads who had attracted their attention.

Other, more serious minded ladies who felt insulted or abused by the unwanted *basiladora* gesture would turn away, displaying great anger and they would verbally slash the one who had done the "tapping."

The San Jacinto Plaza, or *La Plaza de Los Lagartos*, as it later was often called, was not exactly like the plazas in Spain or Mexico. Neither were its customs. But often musicians would come and play inside the *kiosko*. The gaiety, gusto, and the impetuous feelings of love in the hearts and minds of young people still went around in the wide lanes of the large square.

As a young boy, I remember when two of my young aunts took me to the plaza. This gave them an excuse or an opportunity to meet their boyfriends. I remember the *raspas* (snow cones) and the candy they bought for me in exchange for my silence when we got home.

Old El Paso was a city of many memories for my mother. In one sitting she could tell of the many sad and happy events in her life. She described them so well that she made her listeners feel the presence of those days. My mother died on March 22, 1990, at the age of 90 years and 11 months. Up to the end, her mind and memories of old El Paso were vivid and clear.

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**JOE MACIEL** was born in El Paso and attended schools in Tucumcari and Los Angeles He has attended classes in creative writing. He worked for the Southern Pacific Railroad for forty-three years. Joe and his wife, the former Vicenza Moncada, married in 1940 and have four children who are now in Fairbanks, Alaska; Los Angeles: Okeen, Oklahoma; and at Texas A & M, College Station, Texas.

*Right: Georgina Barrera assisted with music.*

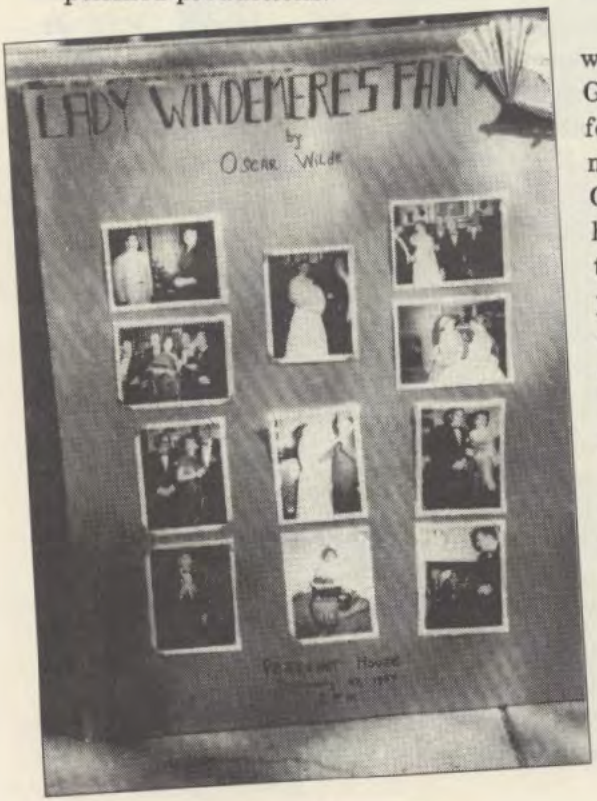
*Center: Byron Merkin and Katherine Coldwell Slutter.*

*Bottom, left to right: "Tex" Miller, Col. Geoffrey Brewster, Kay Miller, Orlando Barrera, E. W. "Casey" Kaiser.*

*Photos by G. A. Goodman, courtesy Carlisle Coldwell Navidomskis*

one of the plays. Sugar Goodman handled the lighting, assisted by Nena Shapleigh, and she also was in charge of photography, using her Polaroid camera, and advertising posters. She also selected and wrote several pieces which the group performed.

*The School for Scandal* by Richard Sheridan was produced at the home of Katherine's mother at 1131 Montana. For the first act, the living room served as the stage. The audience sat in the entryway on folding chairs lent by Byron Merkin from the Popular Dry Goods Company where he was buyer for their gift department. The second act was staged in the dining room and members of the audience had to get up and move their chairs to the living room in order to see. Sugar Goodman stood on a stepladder between the living room and dining room to hold the spotlight. The actresses, elegantly dressed in long evening gowns, and the actors in dinner jackets read their lines by candlelight, and one of the Englishwomen played the piano by the light of a candelabra. Outside of the fancy dress and special lighting, there were few props. The performances were readings rather than polished productions.




Chekhov's *The Bear* was selected by Sugar Goodman to be performed at the Goodmans' home. Ms. Goodman remembers having the impression that Katherine was not pleased that someone other than herself had chosen a play.

*Lady Windemere's Fan* by Oscar Wilde was performed at the home of Mrs. Jane Perrenot. Katherine assigned to Marianne Loewenfield, fresh from playing the lead in *The Voice of the Turtle* at Texas Western College,

# The Bottle Club

## By Carlisle Coldwell Navidomskis

In those years between 1951 and 1956, a unique organization flourished in El Paso. The group met at various homes and was dedicated to the reading and production of plays. The Bottle Club was founded by Katherine Coldwell Slutter when she returned to El Paso after she graduated from Vassar and traveled in Europe. The Bottle Club was so named because the members brought their own liquid refreshment, alcoholic or non-alcholic.

In addition to Katherine, members of the club were Gertrude A. (Sugar) Goodman, Jane Perrenot, Byron Merkin, E.W. Jr. (Casey) and Peggy Ramsey Kaiser, Marianne Loewenfield, Maestro Orlando Barrera, conductor of the El Paso Symphony Orchestra, and his wife Georgina, Ann Wilmarth, and Dwight Edwards. Other members were Katherine's sister Eleanor (Nena) Coldwell Shapleigh, Mary Austin Perrenot, Billy Hooten, Danny Smith, Colonel Roy and Onene Neve Fletcher, and Colbert and Ida Coldwell, Katherine's brother and sister-in-law. Margarita Gomez and Cecilia Gil de Partiarroyo of Juarez were participants. Two British liaison officers who were stationed at Fort Bliss and their wives were also members: Geoffrey and Jeanne Brewster, who was a cousin of British Prime Minister Harold Nicholson, and Colonel Tex and Kay Miller. Another Englishman, a Lt. Col. Samuel, was also a member.

The Bottle Club met at the homes of members or their parents. These included the homes of: Mrs. James C. (Louise) Willmarth on Upson Street in Sunset Heights, Mrs. Ballard (Eleanor) Coldwell at 1131 Montana, now an accountant's office, Mrs. Jane Perrenot, on West Yandell, now the home of the El Paso County Historical Society, and Mr. and Mrs. Karl P. Goodman in Kern Place.

Katherine was producer and director. Maestro Barrera was in charge of playing records for background music and he acted in

now the University of Texas at El Paso, just one line in *Lady Windermere's Fan,* "Yes, Mama." A display of Ms. Goodman's photographs was set up in the foyer. As in the production of *The School for Scandal,* the stage moved from the living room to the den and then to the foyer, with members of the audience required to pick up their chairs and troop into the next room to set them up for the next act. One of the props was a fan which belonged to Ms. Goodman's mother. "She didn't want us to use it, but we did, and we broke it," Ms. Goodman recalled ruefully, adding, "one of Katherine's greatest accomplishments was ordering the general from Fort Bliss who was in the audience to move his chair."

The Bottle Club also performed Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest.* Ms. Goodman recalled that Colbert Coldwell's line "Egad!" which he pronounced "Egged" brought the house down.

Members of the Bottle Club turned up willingly on Sunday afternoons at the various locations to submit themselves to Katherine's energetic direction. She was as selective of the audience as she was of the actors and had to be convinced by her mother that it would not do to invite only one partner in a marriage. Mrs. Coldwell insisted that both spouses had to be included, even if Katherine regarded only one of them as "interesting," according to her sister-in-law, Ida Coldwell.

The Bottle Club marked passages in the lives of its members during its existence by adapting well-known works. Stromboli, a

*At far left: Poster for* Lady Windermere's Fan.

*At right: Jane Burgess Perrenot and Marianne Lowenfield in* Lady Windermere's Fan.

*Photos courtesy Carlisle Coldwell Navidomskis*

movie starring Ingrid Bergman and directed by Roberto Rossellini, was perfortned in honor of the engagement of Ann Wilmarth and Dwight Edwards. Cecilia Gil de Partiarroyo played Ingrid Bergman's part in the Bottle Club production. When Geoffrey and Jeanne Brewster left El Paso to return to England, Sugar Goodman wrote original words to the score of Aida. A talented pianst and singer, a friend of Byron Merkin, recorded this at KTSM Radio where he was employed. Ms. Goodman also wrote "Curtain Rises," a take-off on T. S. Eliot's "The Hollow Men," which was read by Col. Miller and Maestro Barrera.

Katherine Coldwell Slutter's interest in theater was lifelong. In addition to the Bottle Club, she directed young people in productions of Shakespeare at the Vocational School (El Paso Technical Institute) in El Paso in the 1950's. Later, in work with inner-city youth in Manhattan, she used theater to motivate young people and raise their self-esteem. In the late 1980's she "backed" a production of Shakespeare's *Midsummer Night's Dream,* directed by her actress friend Jeanne Schlegel at Veritas, a drug rehabilitation facility in New York City. In a videotape of the still-unpolished performance, the young actors' sense of achievement and exultation is evident in their celebration at the end.

"People liked to participate," Ms. Goodman said. "They respected Katherine. She was unique in wanting to share what she thought was right. She had energy, and she liked to boss." Katherine's zeal for the theater drew differing groups of people into its spell. The Bottle Club in El Paso in the 1950's was one of those groups.

*(The information in this article was obtained during a telephone conversation with Sugar Goodman on August 4, 1991, and during a visit on October 30, 1997. Colbert and Ida Coldwell also provided information on The Bottle Club.)*

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**CARLISLE COLDWELL NAVIDOMSKIS,** daughter of Colbert and Ida Coldwell, is a fifth generation El Pasoan. She graduated from Ysleta High School and received a Bachelor of Arts from Stanford University in 1970 and a Master of Education from the University of Texas at El Paso in 1984. She is currently pursuing licensure as a professional counselor while working as an elementary school counselor. Carlisle and her husband John are the parents of two sons, Navin and Wes.

The "program" that follows is a reproduction of the program that was used for the play *Lady Windermere's Fan,* faithful in all except spacing.

## *Lady Windermere's Fan*

by Oscar Wilde

**CAST**

| | |
|---|---|
| Lady Windermere | Mrs. Brewster |
| Parker | Mr. Smith |
| Lord Darlington | Col. Brewster |
| Duchess of Berwick | Mrs. Perrenot |
| Lady Agatha | Miss Lowenfield |
| Lord Windermere | Col. Miller |
| Lady Stutfield | Mrs. Fletcher |
| Lord Stutfield | Col. Fletcher |
| Mr. Hopper | Mr. Coldwell |
| Lord Augustus Lorton | Mr. Kayser |
| Mr. Ceciolio Graham | Mr. Barera |
| Mrs. Erlynne | Mrs. Miller |
| Footmen | Mr. Wm. Smith |
| | Mr. Hooten |
| Waltzers | Mrs. Hooten |
| | Miss Baker |
| Directed by | Mr. Merkin |
| Produced by | Mrs. Slutter |
| Lights | Miss Goodman |
| | Mrs. Shapleigh |
| Fan donated by | Mrs. Goodman |

London—1899

**ACT ONE**
Morning room in Lord Windermere's House

**ACT TWO**
Ballroom in Lord Windermere's House

INTERMISSION TEN MINUTES

**ACT THREE**
Lord Darlington's Rooms

**ACT FOUR**
A room in Lord Windermere's House

# Book Reviews

**HISTORY WARS: THE ENOLA GAY AND OTHER BATTLES FOR THE AMERICAN PAST by Linenthal, Edward T. and Tom Engelhardt, eds. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1996. Paperback, $14.95.**

The battle over the *Enola Gay* and how the airplane should be exhibited became a battle of how Americans viewed themselves fifty years after the *Enola Gay* dropped the first atom bomb on Hiroshima. The curators of the National Air and Space Museum had little idea that their meticulously planned exhibit would unleash a firestorm of criticism that would eventually involve all the major veterans groups, Congress, the national media, and academics across the country. Edward Linenthal, professor of religion and American culture at the University of Wisconsin, Oshkosh, and Tom Engelhardt, author and media critic, have edited a masterful book that traces the history and culture wars that coalesced around the *Enola Gay* exhibit. Linenthal, Engelhardt, and six historians describe and analyze the clash of values unleashed by the exhibit, reminiscent, on a national scale, of the emotions stirred by the Twelve Travelers here in El Paso.

In the early 1990s when curators at the National Air and Space Museum (NASM) began planning the exhibit, the Smithsonian–of which the National Air and Space Museum is a part–had embraced a new direction: the plans reflected a change in both historical research and muselogy. The change included a more complex interpretation of the past, from an elitist and celebratory stance to a more inclusive and questioning narrative. From the first, the museum planners designed the *Enola Gay* exhibit not as simply a commemoration of the airplane's role in history, but also as an opportunity to pose questions about the Atomic Age and the United States decision to drop the bomb. The working title of the exhibit hinted at their intent, "The Crossroads: The End of World War II, the Atomic Bomb, and the Origins of the Cold War."

The Air and Space Museum planners were following a trend in major exhibits toward more challenging and provocative "revisionist" interpretation. Revisionist history emphasizes cultural and social history, embracing gender issues, minorities, and the nonelite. This revisionist history, so vociferously attacked by critics of the *Enola*

*Gay*, has been a major influence in museums in the past decade. Although influential, it is not without controversy. For instance, a resolution passed by the United States Senate on September 23, 1994, condemned the Museum's original plans. The resolution railed against the exhibit as "revisionist and offensive to many World War II veterans" at the same time that it emphasized the men and women of the Armed Forces. Women were mentioned three times in the resolution with no apparent sense that including women in World War II history is revisionist in itself.

Certainly the National Air and Space Museum has not traditionally embraced revisionist thought. Since its founding in 1946, the National Air and Space Museum's mission has been to celebrate American technology and American military success in war. But under the leadership of Secretary Robert McCormick Adams (1984 to 1994), the Smithsonian had begun to mount major exhibits that deepened analysis and looked for new perspectives. Critics called it "political curating." The Air and Space Museum had already presented, in 1991, an innovation exhibit "debunking the 'Hollywood' romanticization of pilots and planes" in World War I called "Legend, Memory, and the Great War in the Air."

Nothing, though, prepared the planners for the battles over the *Enola Gay* exhibit. Before it was all over, the controversy brought into question nearly all the major American values. It pitted liberals against conservatives, hawks versus doves, academics versus veterans, historiographical approaches versus heroic narrative. In the end, the heroic narrative won. But it was a pyrrhic victory. The Smithsonian backed down, the Air and Space director resigned, and the *Enola Gay* was displayed alone—as essentially an amoral and non-celebratory exhibit, without any examination of the meaning of the beginning of the Atomic Age.

Linenthal and Engelhardt have collaborated on an important book. There are many lessons to be learned for both historians and curators alike. The editors, however, should have provided an index to a book that contains useful and illuminating analysis. Nonetheless, the contributors—including historians Paul Boyer, John Dower, Richard Kohn, Michael Sherry, Mike Wallace, and Marilyn Young—recognized a watershed exhibit in America's cultural history and brilliantly laid out the origins and consequences of the battle for the American past.

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**GERONIMO'S KIDS: A TEACHER'S LESSONS ON THE APACHE RESERVATION by Robert S. Ove and H. Henrietta Stockel, 200 pp., Texas A & M University Press. $24.95, Cloth.**

In 1928 President Herbert Hoover authorized the Merriam Commission to investigate conditions on Indian Reservations. The Merriam Report concluded that after forty years of experimentation under the Dawes Act, which was intended to destroy tribalism, promote individual economic incentives, and encourage assimilation into mainstream society, Indian reservations remained impoverished, illiterate, and unhealthy. Furthermore, despite the best efforts of the Indian Bureau, Congress, and humanitarian reformers, Native Americans had failed to assimilate. Attempting to reverse this situation, in the 1930s Congress passed the Indian Reorganization Act, appointed John Collier to be Commissioner of Indian Affairs and instituted new measures to raise the economic, health, and educational levels of American Indians.

*Geronimo's Kids,* co-authored by Reverend Robert S. Ove and H. Henrietta Stockel, proved that in the late 1940s very little of the essential circumstances had changed on the reservations. While government policy had resulted in some improvement, it was the efforts of individual teachers and missionaries, such as Ove, who created the most positive influence in the everyday lives of reservation Indians. In 1948 Robert Ove first arrived at Whitetail, New Mexico on the Mescalero Apache Reservation to teach Chiricahua children "back in the days when the reservation community was thriving." Written half a century later, Ove's memoirs are full of vivid descriptions of the environment, rich character studies of the people, and both humorous and depressing anecdotes about the conditions.

As a recently-graduated English major, Ove accepted the post at the isolated village, because the job did not require a teaching certificate and his opportunities were limited. The job did, however, require a wife, a minor problem resolved by the young teacher who hurriedly convinced his fiance to marry and relocate in the small, remote community. In time Ove learned that the school and the "teacherage," their living quarters, served as "the entertainment center, the telephone exchange, the transportation station, a first aid unit, and even a first court of adjudication when marital problems arose." The young teacher also functioned as an environmental and health advocate when he unsuccessfully petitioned the Indian Bureau to improve the rat-infested water tanks.

Throughout his year tenure, Ove collected material through long, unrecorded and forthright conversations held on his porch with older residents, through phonographs developed in his own basement, and

through teaching the Apache children. Not only was Ove instructing an ethnic group totally unfamiliar to him save through stereotypical Hollywood imagery, he was a completely inexperienced teacher with no training or methodology. His saving grace seemed to be the ability to relate to the Apache children on a basic human level. "After all these Apache children were just like other students – and like other children for that matter," is a sentiment often repeated in his reminiscences. Despite this assertion, Ove continually criticized the educational curriculum of the Indian Bureau for its overwhelming white ethnocentrism and for ignoring the rich history of these descendants of Geronimo.

This book is the outcome of a collaboration between Ove, who had retired as a Lutheran minister in Cheyenne, Wyoming with his second wife, Pat, and H. Henrietta Stockel, author of *Women of the Apache Nation: Voices of Truth.* In 1992 Ove returned to the Mescalero Reservation in a visit he described as "both gratifying and heartbreaking" to meet Stockel who convinced him to write the book. The only fault one can find with this historical autobiography is the regret that Ove did not remain in the Indian Bureau to help reorient the educational curriculum. His compassion and insight would have been invaluable in the forties and fifties as an antidote to the termination policies of the Republican period. He should feel exonerated, however, that in the 1960's and 1970's, young adults, perhaps some of them his students, led the effort to recapture their history and culture in that pivotal period.

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**LBJ & MEXICAN AMERICANS–THE PARADOX OF POWER. By Julie Leininger Pycior. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1997. $45.00, Cloth; $19.95, Paper.**

Among the spate of recently published books about the life and career of Lyndon Johnson. Perhaps the most original is Julie Leininger Pycior's *LBJ & Mexican Americans: The Paradox of Power.* Whereas the other new releases examine areas already well-covered, Pycior analyzes an important but heretofore neglected relationship. Her scholarship is first rate—the archival research is prodigious, many of the interviews conducted for the book are of new, yet-to-be-heard voices, and her usage of existing research is equally extensive. The work is a study of the forty year association between an emerging and evolving group, profoundly affected by broader social forces, and the politician recognized as the catalyst for the greatest social change

of the postwar period.

Pycior captures the essence of LBJ early in the book. Describing his relationship with students at the Cotulla Mexican school where he was first exposed to Mexican American culture and the social and economic discrimination they faced, she writes that Johnson "tried to resolve conflicts, to find some common ground." To do this, "he vowed to convert his students into true believers of the American dream," and they would reciprocate with "the love and respect he craved, and enhancing his professional reputation." (p. 18) Finding that balance between improving the greater public good and promoting his personal ambitions would fuel LBJ's hopes and fears, and form the mold within which his association with groups would be cast.

In that respect, he treated Mexican Americans no differently than he treated others. On the one hand he provided to them considerable assistance. Using her interviews with scholars David Montejano and Gilberto Cardenas, Pycior notes that Johnson accomplished more for Mexican Americans than any other president. Her accounts of Cotulla, the Longoria burial, and his Great Society programs offer strong evidence for that assertion. But there were costs involved. Not until he reached the presidency did he become a forceful advocate for civil rights. And there were others better able to vie for his attention—business interests in general, and conservative Texas agricultural and petroleum interests in particular. Pycior chronicles the crucial times when Johnson sided with business interests rather than the Mexican Americans. Her account of LBJ's role in the *Bracero* legislation of the early 1950's is such an example.

Pycior's major contributions are twofold. The first rests in her detailed analysis of how prominent Mexican American individuals and groups of the postwar period established at a minimum rapprochement, and in some cases developed friendships, with LBJ. Gus Garcia, Chris Aldrete, Vicente Ximenes, and Dr. Hector Garcia are but a few of the many longtime LBJ associates who were prominent in nurturing those ties. But equally important were others such as Corky Gonzales and Bert Corona, onetime insiders who first called into question LBJ's support for Mexican Americans and his Vietnam policy, severed their ties to him, and then laid the formation of the Chicano movement. The second rests in her analysis of the evolution of Mexican Americans and organizations, and their impact on the links with LBJ. Johnson's first contact with Mexican American groups was through LULAC and the American GI Forum, organizations formed by Mexican Americans to combat discrimination. Their ever growing political activism during the 1950's made them increasingly difficult to ignore, and by the 1960's Mexican Americans were of such

sufficient electoral strength that the Democratic party incorporated the "Viva Kennedy" and "Viva Johnson" efforts into their campaigns. Finally, government-formed programs of the Great Society such as the Community Action Programs and the Job Corps served as the training ground for community activism by soon-to-be activists in the Chicano movement. Each generation of Mexican Americans diminished its support for LBJ. And so it is ironic that in the end, the very programs created during the Johnson presidency with the hope of assisting low income Mexican Americans also became the training ground for those most opposed to his policies. Included among them are Carlos Truan and Gonzalo Barrientos, now state senators in the Texas Legislature.

Ultimately, the reader is presented with a picture of an ambitious president well-known for his need to be in control and at the center of power, and his affinity for a group that through most of his career remained at his side, but which in the end broke with him. If there is something missing in the book it would be the reaction of Johnson to the loss of their once strong support. *L.B.J and Mexican Americans* provides interesting reading for students of the man as well as for those who are interested in racial and ethnic matters.

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**CHICANISMO: The Forging of A Militant Ethos Among Mexican Americans. By Ignacio M. Garcia. Tucson, University of Arizona Press, 1997. $35.00, Cloth; $17.95, Paper.**

In *Chicanismo: The Forging of a Militant Ethos Among Mexican Americans,* Ignacio Garcia seeks to shed new light on the significance of the Chicano movement in Chicano history. He emphasizes that in order to understand the true legacy of this transformative era, we should not view it as "simply a search for identity." Rather, he argues, it should be recognized, as a homogeneous political ethos or agenda that Mexican Americans constructed to "combat racism, discrimination, poverty, and segregation."

Garcia's argument is weakened, however, by his insistence to present the Chicano movement as being solely a political transformation. Chicanos, African Americans, and other ethnic activists in the 1960s sought much more than just political gains and employment opportunities. They wanted to rearrange the discourse which governed American thought. The Chicano movement was essentially, but not exclusively, a quest for a new identity. It was a revolt in and of culture that was manifested in a variety of forms.

Garcia does not neglect culture and identity altogether, he just does so out of context. The main problem with this book is that it forces a rich range of expression into a narrow political framework. Garcia, for example, stated that "activists chose to identify certain symbols, events, rhetoric, and forms of resistance as being part of a pool of consciousness that gave meaning to the term Chicano." If this doesn't reflect the process of identity construction, I don't know what does. His argument is weakened by the presentation of dynamic, heterogeneous influences to support a homogeneous central argument. This book, therefore, does not synthesize or do justice to the rich range of expression which characterized the Chicano movement. Expressions of self-awareness and ethnic pride are not formed in response to oppression alone. They maintain significance outside of economic or political hierarchies also. Relying on a homogeneous political ethos, Garcia's static argument also fails to acknowledge the significance of internal class and gender divisions. His argument, therefore, was limited fromthe onset.

Despite the inconsistency of the book, Garcia should be commended for his effort to shed light on the real political gains of the Chicano movement. The significance of the movement for Chicanos today, however, is explicated on only one level. Viewing the movement through the window of culture allows us to see that the construction of an enduring identity helped to spread a counter hegemonic and empowering ideology much further. This book does not present new direction or challenges for Chicano scholarship. Garcia does contribute a sufficient chronology of Chicano political thought, however. For young students, it offers an adequate introduction into an important episode in Chicano history.

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