

PASSWORD



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PASSWORD

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1011 North Mesa (Dec. 2000)

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El Paso's "Fifth Avenue": Mesa Avenue

*A Survey of the Major Residential
Buildings on North Mesa Street,
1900-1930*

By **Laura K. Hollingsed**



tately mansions and high-class apartment buildings, the homes of El Paso's wealthy citizens, once lined Mesa Avenue. From 1900 to 1930, many of the elite citizens of the booming city of El Paso chose to build their fine homes along Mesa Avenue, as it was then called. The

residents could walk or drive downhill from their homes to their stores, banks, law and medical practices, or other businesses in downtown El Paso only a few blocks away. These professionals and business owners felt safe living on Mesa Avenue where their families were protected and insulated from the wild, lawless life of early twentieth-century El Paso.

Until the arrival of the railroad in 1881, El Paso was a small dusty village. Within a very short time, men and women from every walk of life arrived in El Paso by train to join the handful of pioneers already here. According to Anson Mills, a resident of early El Paso, the town soon gained "the just reputation of being among the most disorderly and lawless in the country."¹ Nonetheless, other men came with the desire to build not only fortunes, but also families and communities. In *Out of the Desert*, another El Pasoan, Owen White, proclaimed that "El Paso stands as a magnificent monument to those few men who took the pioneer's chance and who laid the foundations for all of the development which we see around us and of which we are so proud."² The men and women who eventually settled on Mesa Avenue were mainly immigrants from other parts of the United States or from Europe.

A few had been in town before the advent of the railroad, but many of them came shortly after the great event. Some came by way of Mexico or the west coast, while others came from the eastern United States and Canada. Many of the early residents of Mesa Avenue were Jewish immigrants born in Germany, Austria, Poland, Hungary, and other parts of Eastern Europe. El Paso historian W. H. Timmons wrote:

Of the various immigrant groups who came to El Paso in the 1880's and 1890's by far the most significant and influential in the life of the business community were the Jews from Germany and Austria-Hungary. Motivated by a desire to escape the militaristic regimes of their European homelands, coupled with the promise of rich rewards and opportunities on the Southwest frontier, Jewish pioneers came by the scores.³

From these varied backgrounds immigrants poured into El Paso providing employment for themselves and their relatives who worked at building business empires, families, and a civilized community.

Maps of El Paso show that in the 1880s and 1890s there were only a handful of homes north of the railroad tracks.⁴ The more prosperous citizens of the town settled along Myrtle and Magoffin Avenues. The *El Paso Herald* reported, "The area east of the downtown section soon became the exclusive and aristocratic center of the community. Almost weekly there were elegant balls and parties, with guests including officers from Ft. Bliss."⁵ Soon the growing city had developments in every direction.

By the late 1890s a building boom began north of the Southern Pacific Railroad tracks along Mesa Avenue, North Stanton, and North Oregon Streets, and spread east and west at the same time. An 1898 map of El Paso shows development up through the 900 block of Mesa Avenue with only a handful of homes in the 1000 block. According to the *El Paso Herald*, "Scores of residences arose along Mesa Avenue for the next two or three years; and while some envious residents of the south side called that section 'Piety Hill,' the Mesa people prided themselves as living on the 'Fifth Avenue of El Paso.'"⁶ The earliest addition to the north of the city was started by developer, Colonel J. Fisher Satterthwaite, called the Satterthwaite Addition. Later, development began in Alexander's Addition, just north of Satterthwaite's. The majority

of homes along Mesa Avenue were built between 1900-1920 in Alexander's Addition on the edge of the newly developed Kern Place. Many of the residents of the Magoffin and Myrtle Avenue areas erected new homes on Mesa Avenue during this time.

The entire length of Mesa Street was originally named Utah Street, and the section below San Antonio Street was notorious for its saloons, gambling dens, and houses of prostitution. Efforts started early to reform El Paso's sordid tenderloin district. At the turn of the century, in an attempt to distance their neighborhood from the bad part of town, "the aristocratic dwellers of the north side" changed the name of their street to Mesa Avenue.⁷ It was not until 1930 that Utah Street became South Mesa, and Mesa Avenue was called North Mesa Street. By that time, North Mesa Street was the main thoroughfare linking the outer suburbs such as Kern Place to the downtown area. Mesa Street was the first street in El Paso to be paved, showing its importance to city leaders and residents.⁸

The entire length of Mesa Street was originally named Utah Street, and the section below San Antonio Street became notorious for its saloons, gambling dens, and houses of prostitution. Efforts started early to reform El Paso's sordid tenderloin district.

Today the street is still a main thoroughfare between the downtown area and the west side of the city. Unfortunately the construction of the interstate highway through El Paso destroyed more than a whole block of North Mesa Street and its structures. Other buildings were demolished as needs of the growing city progressed up the mesa. Many of the remaining buildings along North Mesa are in dire need of preservation and protection. These historic and beautiful structures are rapidly decaying and disappearing, and the city of El Paso is in danger of losing an important part of her precious heritage. Unfortunately, no official historic district exists to protect the area once known as El Paso's finest address. The depressing fate of much of the once proud and rich Mesa Avenue is a startling reminder of the tenuous situation of the remaining buildings that were once the homes of the rich and famous of El Paso.

Today, a relatively small number of residents live in the once genteel apartments and modest motels on North Mesa Street. The area is painted with decay and neglect and many vacant lots speak of homes that have disappeared. The few restored mansions left standing house commercial interests such as medical clinics, lawyers' offices, and beauty salons and are only hollow ghosts of their former grandeur. Many of the homes were razed years ago in the name of progress to make room for motels and office buildings. Others have been demolished quite recently, and are vivid reminders of the perilous existence of the neighborhood. The concrete and gravel parking areas and vacant lots give no clues to the previous occupants. The street that was once called El Paso's "Fifth Avenue" is a haunting reminder of its previous residents, the men and their families who helped build the city of El Paso.⁹

The more important dwellings in the residential area, roughly the 500-1700 blocks, were built between the years of 1900 to 1930. A survey of these dwellings shows the historic significance of this street to El Paso. At least five of the residences—the Brazos Apartments, the Zach White mansion, the Adolph Schwartz residence, the Rue Jackson house, and the Lawrence Lawson house—were designed by one of El Paso's most famous architectural groups, Trost and Trost. The names of the architects of many of the other structures along North Mesa Street are unknown, but their art is evident in the lasting beauty of their imposing creations.

The home of Manuel Ainsa was located at 515 Mesa Avenue. The brick mansion had ceilings which were twelve feet high, windows of beveled glass, and a huge dining room that was the scene of weddings and debuts for the Ainsa children. Manuel Ainsa was born in Mexico, and he and his wife came to El Paso in 1882 after living in San Francisco. He came to El Paso to join in business with associate Maurice Ullmann, a prosperous furniture merchant who probably lived at 1200 Mesa Avenue. Ainsa eventually began a wholesale flour and grain business in the El Paso area and headed a family business with his sons Frank, Alexander, and Richard. By 1910, Manuel Ainsa had died, and his sons continued the business after his death. His widow Eloisa and sons Alexander and Richard lived in the home. Manuel's son Frank Ainsa lived at 912 Mesa Avenue at that time, and later built another imposing mansion at 1011 Mesa Avenue. After serving as a boarding house for a time, the Manuel Ainsa home was razed in 1937.¹⁰

The early twentieth century was the heyday of "high-class community residences" or apartment buildings. In 1902, El Paso had no apartment buildings except for modest boarding houses, but by 1915, the *El Paso Herald* boasted, "Now we have 50, with half as many more under construction."¹¹ In 1918, the same newspaper proclaimed, "El Paso has more first-class "apartment houses than any city its size in the United States."¹² Indeed, Mesa Avenue had more than half a dozen apartment buildings for well-to-do residents.

The Brazos Flats at 514-516 Mesa Avenue were among the earliest apartment buildings in El Paso. Situated at the corner of Mesa Avenue and Missouri Street, the three-story structure contained nineteen apartments and shops in a raised basement. The Brazos was situated between downtown El Paso and the residential area, and its combination of residences and commercial interests in the same structure symbolized the growing urbanization of the city. The Brazos was designed by Trost and Trost for Charles Davis, mayor of El Paso, who held a strong belief in the city's need to improve and progress. This fine apartment building was completed in 1905, and two additional floors were planned but never constructed. In 1978 the Brazos apartment building was demolished.¹³

Colonel Robert E. Campbell built his mansion at 701 Mesa Avenue on the corner of Wyoming Street on an impressive property that fronted one hundred twenty feet on Wyoming and seventy-eight feet on Mesa. Campbell was a native of Tennessee and was postmaster and mayor of El Paso. At the time of its construction in 1882 or 1883, the Campbell home was the third house built north of the railroad tracks in El Paso. Other homes were built on the north side of the tracks by Alex Tays and Ernest Krause a year or two earlier. Built of California redwood, the Campbell house was one of the finest homes in the Southwest. In 1917 the old Campbell home was sold to the architectural firm of Trost and Trost for \$46,000. The Trosts planned to develop the property for commercial purposes.¹⁴

Another mayor of El Paso, Charles E. Kelly, lived in a large home at 900 Mesa Avenue on the corner of Montana and Mesa. Kelly, a pharmacist, owned Kelly and Pollard Company, and he was very active in the political life of El Paso. Kelly was appointed mayor in 1910 when in a fire at Calisher's Store, a wall

collapsed on Mayor William F. Robinson and Fireman Finis T. "Todd" Ware killing both of them. Kelly served two terms as mayor until 1915, when he was defeated by Tom Lea. The Kelly family lived at 900 Mesa Avenue until 1920. By 1926, a gas station and tire supply company occupied the property.¹⁵

The Henry Pfaff house and its neighbor, the historic Dr. Paul Gallagher home, later the home of Dr. Michael Schuster, at 1001 North Stanton, were demolished in 1968 to make way for proposed medical and professional offices which were never built.

Henry Pfaff's home, built in the 1890s, once stood on the corner of Mesa and Rio Grande at 1000 Mesa Avenue. Pfaff, born in 1860 in Dresden, Germany, immigrated first to Mexico and then to Texas in 1886, arriving in El Paso in 1893. He worked as a liquor distributor, bottler, and in real estate. Henry Pfaff lived in the house until his death in the 1920s, after which his family lived there into the thirties. According to a description of the grandeur of the home in the *El Paso Herald Post*, "The entire third floor of the red brick mansion is a ballroom that will accommodate 75 guests. So expertly is the

ballroom built with double floors that there are no vibrations from the dancing." With many gables and turrets, the Pfaff residence was a prime example of high Victorian style. The home was sold in 1941 to Dr. Stephen Schuster who was the brother of Dr. Frank Schuster and the son of Dr. Michael Schuster, founder of Providence Memorial Hospital. The Schusters were Austrian-Hungarian immigrants to El Paso.

The Henry Pfaff house and its neighbor, the historic Dr. Paul Gallagher home, later the home of Dr. Michael Schuster, at 1001 North Stanton, were demolished in 1968 to make way for proposed medical and professional offices which were never built. The Pfaff property was purchased for \$37,500 at that time. A small portion of the Pfaff home remains in El Paso however. In 1969, after the house's demolition, the peaked "witch's hat" roof of its tower became part of the bandstand in La Villita Shopping Center downtown. Then in 1980, the roof moved to the El Paso Zoo as the top of the entrance gazebo. Today, the bare gravel parking lot at 1000 North Mesa Street bears no clue that a huge old home with gables, turrets, and fancy porches surrounded by greenery and palm trees once covered the site.¹⁶



1011 North Mesa · The north and west walls which show the size of the house (Dec. 2000)

On the corner of Mesa and Arizona at 1011 North Mesa Street, stands the enormous, stately home built by Frank S. Ainsa, son of Manuel and Eloisa Ainsa. In 1913, Frank S. Ainsa started building his spectacular home, which was designed by architects Gibson and Robertson according to the *El Paso Herald*. While the Ainsa home was under construction in 1913, the front porch collapsed because of weak supports. The noise was so loud that many people thought stray shells from the Mexican Revolution, which was being fought across the river in Juárez, had hit the home. The huge classical style home cost about \$25,000 to build and had a turntable for cars in the garage. The fireproof home included an in-house communication system and electric locking gates. As "one of El Paso's leading social centers during the 1920s," the home hosted many illustrious visitors, among them General John J. Pershing. The magnificent home is beautifully preserved and is currently used for law offices.¹⁷

The large house at 1014 North Mesa at the corner of Mesa and Arizona Streets has a rich history. Rumors say the house is haunted and has a secret tunnel built during the Mexican Revolution "as an escape route to St. Patrick's Cathedral" across the street. Although some persons have claimed to have seen the ghost, no one has ever found the tunnel. Arthur A. Kline, owner of Arthur Kline and Company, importers of Mexican and Indian curios, was probably the first occupant of the house that was built in the late 1890s. Kline was born to German parents in the Alsace region of France about 1850, and came to the United States in 1868. By 1917, Kline had moved to the Rosemont Apartments on North Oregon Street.¹⁸



1014 North Mesa (Dec. 2000)

The house was then occupied by the new Bishop of El Paso, Most Reverend Anthony Schuler, who lived there until his retirement in 1942. Bishop Schuler, a colorful man who was reported to have enjoyed “drinking, betting on horse races, and prize fighting,” was the first Jesuit bishop in the United States. He was born in Pennsylvania in 1869 to German parents. The home of Arthur A. Kline and Bishop Schuler has been restored and is now an office building.¹⁹

The massive home of El Paso pioneer Adolph Krakauer stood at 1101 Mesa Avenue and occupied half a block. Born in Germany in 1846 of Polish parents, Krakauer came to El Paso from San Antonio in 1875. He eventually established a hardware company, Krakauer, Zork and Moye, with his two brothers-in-law. Krakauer served as president of real estate, investment, and insurance companies and as bank director for two El Paso banks. He was elected mayor of El Paso in 1889, but could not serve because he was not yet officially a citizen of the United States. His wife, Ada Zork Krakauer, daughter of Louis Zork, a leading merchant of San Antonio, traveled by stagecoach with her baby from San Antonio to El Paso in 1877 to join her husband. The multistory Krakauer home in El Paso which was built approximately in 1900 had wrap-around porches and keyhole arched doors and windows. The interior was impressive with “walls of hand-painted Irish linen,” and “the large brick carriage house where prominent El Pasoans

once stepped from their carriages and buggies onto the curving driveway is [was] a reminder of El Paso's early days."²⁰

Dr. Hugh Crouse, a noted surgeon, bought the Krakauer house in 1917. Born in Indiana in 1869, Dr. Crouse came to practice medicine in El Paso in 1903. He set up a research laboratory that he later sold to Dr. W. W. Waite.²¹ In 1938, Dr. Crouse's widow sold the home to the Catholic Church for use as a religious retreat. The lovely old home was demolished sometime after the 1960s. The lot is vacant, and no sign of the beautiful old home exists.

The church, rectory, schools, and support buildings for St. Patrick's Cathedral and the Catholic Diocese now take up the northeast side of the 1100, 1200, and 1300 blocks of North Mesa Street. Both Nevada and California Streets between North Stanton and North Mesa Streets on that side are closed to traffic. An unusual home probably built for Maurice Ullmann or for his son-in-law and daughter, Eugene and Clotilda Ullmann Fatman around 1900, once stood on that site at 1200 North Mesa Street. Eugene Fatman was born about 1861 in New York of German parents. According to 1906 and 1910 records Fatman and his family lived in the house. In 1906, Louise Ullmann, widow of Maurice, and Ben Levy, a brother-in-law who later lived at 1516 Mesa Avenue, also lived with the Fatman family. By 1920, Jacob E. Meyer, a stockbroker and agent with Dunbar and Company resided in the home. After the 1920s the home became a rooming house. The two-story home with multiple roofs and a rounded front bay was demolished in 1964.²²

Zachariah T. "Zach" White, an El Paso businessman who came to El Paso in 1881 with \$10,000 sewn into his vest, built a house that was described at the time as "the most elaborate in the city."²³ A native of Virginia, White was in real estate, ranching, and in many other business ventures. He helped bring electricity and gas to El Paso and built one of the earliest bridges over the Rio Grande. He donated land and money to various community efforts, such as a new country club and Boy Scout camp in the upper valley. White's grandest venture was the Hotel Paso Del Norte designed by architect Henry C. Trost and built in downtown El Paso. The fabulous stained-glass dome over the bar in the Hotel Paso del Norte was said to have been designed by Tiffany Studios of New York. Completed in 1912, Zach White's "dream hotel" cost over 1.5 million dollars to build and was considered the finest hotel in the southwest.²⁴ The hotel's visitors included the rich

and famous such as presidents of the United States and Mexico, Pancho Villa, and movie stars.²⁵

In his memoirs Brigadier General S. L. A. Marshall said,

. . . Zach White was a very, very strong person in every respect. He knew what he wanted and he knew how to get it. He was capable of taking on great responsibilities and he never hesitated about doing so. He had . . . as much to do with the advance of this city as any person that you could name from that period.²⁶

In 1923, Owen White described Zach White as "the owner of more revenue producing business property than any other man in El Paso."²⁷ Zach White was probably one of the richest, if not the richest of the men in El Paso during the period from 1900 to 1930.

Zach White's dream home, a beautiful imposing Greek Revival style residence at 1201 North Mesa, designed by Henry C. Trost, was completed in 1906.²⁸ The huge home had five bedrooms, a billiard room, a library, a ballroom, and a widow's walk on the roof. White resided at the house with his family until his death in 1933.²⁹ In 1942, E. B. Henley, the vice-president and manager of El Paso Cotton Industries, was in residence when a fire broke out on the first floor.³⁰ Eventually, the home became a restaurant and an upscale women's shop and was used as the offices for The White House department store. It even housed a nightclub at one point in its later history. In 1988 the old home regained some of its dignity when Dr. and Mrs. John Liddicoat and Javier Reyes rejuvenated the building as professional office space. The exterior of the home has been completely restored with additions. The



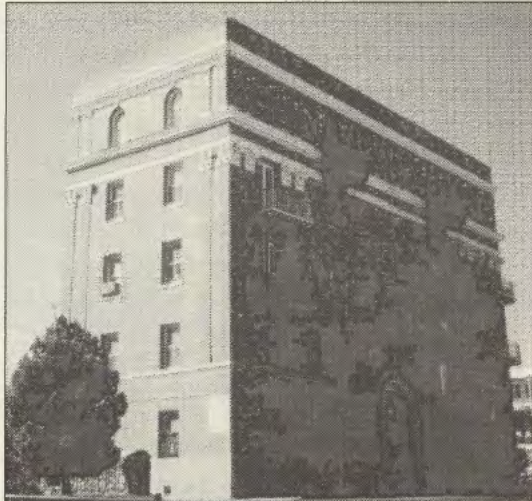
1201 North Mesa (from a photo c. 1990)

interior was drastically remodeled for office space, but the original staircase and portions of the woodwork remain.³¹

The Mecca Apartments once stood between the Zach White home and the Patterson Apartments at 1211 Mesa Avenue. The Mecca Apartments, smaller than the Patterson building but equally respectable, were built about 1922 and were razed at some time after 1975. The site is now the parking lot for the Zach White office building.

Mrs. Mildred Patterson owned the five-story Patterson Apartments, designed by architect H. M. Beutell and built in 1917 at 1217 Mesa Avenue. The structure cost \$55,000, and was built by R. E. McKee, contractor.³³ "One of the finest and most costly apartments," the Patterson Apartments had the first automatic elevator in El Paso.³⁴ Today the former Patterson Apartments building survives valiantly on the corner of North Mesa and California Streets, but the building is in need of preservation.

The Knickerbocker Apartments, located across the street at 1214-1216 Mesa Avenue and built around 1915, were the height of luxury living.³⁵ Like the Patterson Apartments, the Knickerbocker was home to doctors, lawyers, and bankers, among others. The building's owner, Allen Grambling, a lawyer, lived in the apartments with his wife and widowed mother.³⁶ Sadly, the Knickerbocker Apartments had to be removed to make way for church and school needs.



1217 North Mesa
(Dec. 2000)



1217 North Mesa, detail

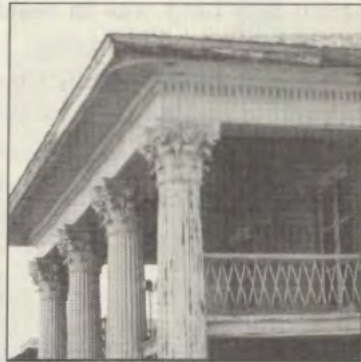
The home of Frank Powers, developer, contractor, and later president of the *El Paso Times*, was located at 1307 Mesa Avenue. Powers, a native of Virginia, arrived in El Paso in 1882. He constructed the El Paso Chamber of Commerce building in 1908 and the \$300,000 Union Depot passenger station, among his many city projects.³⁷ His lovely turreted home with wraparound porches, carriage house, and livery stables was built in 1902, one of the earlier homes on Mesa Avenue.³⁸ Frank Powers owned the largest planing mill in the Southwest at the time, and “put the best of everything into his home.” The house contained an elevator and a ventilated meat closet. Other features of the house were a circular “dome-shaped” room, wall tapestries, and a chandelier from Czechoslovakia.³⁹ The cost of the home was \$65,000—a huge amount of money for a residence in those times. Frank Powers lived in the house until his death in 1950 at the age of 90.⁴⁰ Mr. and Mrs. John Marcus Baird bought the house from Powers’ widow and restored its former beauty.⁴¹ However, just a few years later in 1959, the Powers home was leveled “in the name of progress.”⁴²

Another magnificent Henry C. Trost home still stands at 1501 North Mesa Street, the Adolph Schwartz home.⁴³ Schwartz, born in Austria of German-Jewish parents, immigrated to the United States in 1883, where he built a retail empire with the Popular Dry Goods Company in which many of the members of the huge Schwartz family worked. The home, designed by Trost in the classic revival style, cost \$40,000 to build in 1916. The



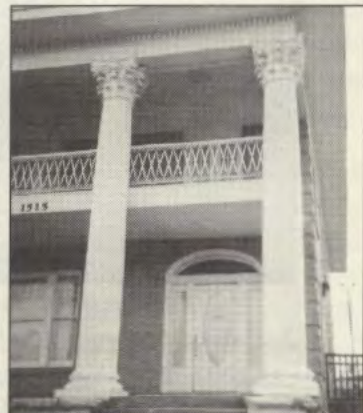
1501 North Mesa (Dec. 2000)

interior featured a large entrance hall with staircase, a music room, and sunroom. The front walls had to be torn down and rebuilt during construction because of the inability to import the special brick from Germany due to the ongoing World War.⁴⁵ The lovely old home accommodates physicians' offices today.



1515 North Mesa (Dec. 2000) · Detail at right

Adjacent to the Adolph Schwartz home stands the Grecian temple-style home at 1515 North Mesa Street. Frank Wells Brown, who was active in the newspaper and real estate business, built the house in 1911.⁴⁶ Although a native of Maine, Brown came to El Paso in 1885 from Mexico City.⁴⁷ As with many other El Pasoans, Brown was an admirer of Francisco Madero who visited the Brown family often during the years of the Mexican Revolution.⁴⁸ Until recently, the once grand house was in a state of advanced deterioration with peeling paint, rotting wood, and boarded up windows and doors. As a much-needed sign of optimism for the other historic homes on North Mesa Street, the exterior of the home has been respectfully restored to its original beauty.



1515 North Mesa, restored (Aug. 2004) · Detail at right

The two-story white stucco house at 1516 North Mesa Street also hides its former gracious life. No landscaping or ornamentation is left around the house, and its original beauty is hidden. The first listing in the city directories for that address was in 1915 when the occupant of the house was John Sorenson. In 1920 and 1930 Ben Levy was in residence.⁴⁹ Passing through El Paso in 1898, Levy decided to stay. He began work as a salesman with the Union-Fashion Clothing Company. Six years later Ben Levy was a partner and became sole owner by 1920. He sold his business and retired in 1946. Levy served El Paso as alderman and president of the volunteer fire department. He married Irma Ullmann, daughter of another important El Paso pioneer family.⁵⁰



1601 North Mesa (Dec. 2000) · Demolished 2000



1601 North Mesa (Aug. 2004) · Replacement

Architect Henry C. Trost designed a stately four-bedroom home at 1601 Mesa Avenue in 1914 for Mrs. Rue Jackson at a cost of \$18,000.⁵¹ The wealthy Mrs. Jackson, the widow of A. P. Jackson, lived there for only a short time. By 1920, Joseph Spence, an

executive with the Anderson-Filler Investment firm was in residence. In 1930, a lawyer named Cyrus H. Jones owned the home.⁵² Although the mansion was a lovely example of Trost architecture, the home was razed in 2004 to make way for a physician's office.

A charming home once owned by William S. Crombie of the Crombie Candy and Syrup Company is situated next door to the site of the former Jackson residence at 1611 North Mesa Street. Crombie, a Canadian, immi-



1611 North Mesa (Aug. 2004)

grated to the United States in 1889.⁵³ He came to El Paso in 1902 with his father, G. M. Crombie. William Crombie served as president of the Rotary Club, and was active in the Sun Carnival Association and the Chamber of Commerce.⁵⁴ This house has been refurbished and retains much of its original style.

Another stylish apartment house was located at 1620 Mesa Avenue. The Altman Apartments built by contractor R. I. Rushing for C. D. Altman in 1917, cost \$14,000 to build.⁵⁵ The Altman contained all the latest modern conveniences with six large apartments for executives and professionals. The Altman Apartments have vanished, and that entire side of the 1600 block of North Mesa Street is a vacant lot with steps that lead nowhere, eroding retaining walls, and boarded-up garages built into the hillside.

The imposing Tudor-style home at 1700 North Mesa Street was built in 1916 for Mrs. Sam Silverman, the widow of a prominent businessman. Mrs. Silverman was vice-president of the Sam Silverman Company which sold dry goods and furniture. The house cost \$12,000 when erected by H. Brettler.⁵⁶ By 1920, the residence had become the home of Ignatz Weiss, the vice-president of Popular Dry Goods Company and a relative of Adolph Schwartz.



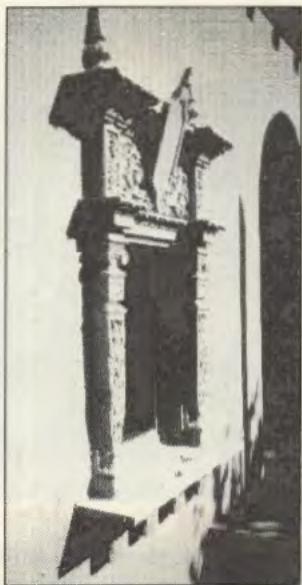
1700 North Mesa (Aug. 2000)

Weiss came to the United States from his native Hungary around the year 1899. Weiss lived in the home until his death in 1935.⁵⁷ An art gallery is the current occupant of the home.

Just below the crest of the hill at 1712 North Mesa stands one of Henry Trost's most famous houses in El Paso, the Lawrence Lawson home. Lawson was born in Washington, D.C. and came to El Paso in 1913 as the project engineer for the United States Reclamation Service.⁵⁸ Built in 1913 at a cost of \$6,000, the home was decorated with exquisite exterior stone carvings.⁵⁹ Although



1712 North Mesa (Dec. 2000)



1712 North Mesa, detail

the house is of modest size with only three bedrooms, the elaborate yet simple design of the exterior allows the home to be in balance with the scale of its larger neighbors on each side.⁶⁰ Lawson's lovely home now houses a beauty salon.

The dignified brick mansion located above the Lawson house was built for James C. White around 1927. It was given the number 1716 at that time, but that house number has since been changed to 1714. White, the owner of a prominent real estate firm in El Paso, served as the president of the El Paso Board of Realtors. Unlike most of the other residents of North Mesa Avenue, White was born in El Paso in 1885.⁶¹ He was the son of the pioneer James H. White. The elder White was described as "a soldier, frontiersman, public official, civic leader," and he fought for the nations of Mexico, the United States, and for the Confederacy during the years 1861 to 1872.⁶² As with many of the other houses on the street, the White mansion is now a doctor's office.



1714 North Mesa (Dec. 2000)



1710 North Mesa (Dec. 2000)

A uniquely designed brick home with tile roof, built in 1916 for \$15,000, sits on the opposite side of the street at 1701 North Mesa Street.⁶³ Vincent Andreas was the first owner, but by 1920, a family of jewelers, the Silberberg Brothers, Robert and Abraham and their families, occupied the house. The Silberbergs were born in Mexico to German parents. The industrious Silberberg brothers sold railroad tickets, watches, and jewelry. The Silberberg family lived in the house until about 1925, and by 1930 the house had many different occupants.⁶⁴ The house is presently a physician's office. The proud old home with its intricate brick details is the last survivor of the old homes on that block. The house is greatly endangered and stands in the shadow of a looming and ever-growing medical center.

A lovely serene white house decorated with green ornamental tiles and potted plants on its porches and balconies once adorned the corner of Mesa Avenue and Rim Road.⁶⁵ The home of Dr. and Mrs. James Vance at 1717 Mesa Avenue was built in 1915 and described at that time as "one of the prettiest in the city." The house cost \$8,000 to build by the Coles Building and Real Estate Company.⁶⁶ The formerly beautiful house managed to survive in recent years as an unrecognizable ugly brown box which housed medical laboratories. About 2003 the down-and-out structure was demolished to add space for the encroaching medical center. Dr. Vance, a surgeon, was a champion golfer who played golf on greens made of oiled sand at the El Paso Country Club in the 1920s.⁶⁷ Mrs.



1717 North Mesa (Dec. 2000)

Vance's widowed father, Leigh Clark, an El Paso judge and district attorney, also lived in the house. Dr. Vance built another home in 1914 at Boulevard and Montezuma Streets.⁶⁸

The Vance home and other vanished structures on North Mesa Street exemplify the plight of the remaining historic buildings on old Mesa Avenue. Some of the stately homes of El Paso's pioneers have been lost completely, but those remaining deserve to be protected and preserved. The buildings along North Mesa Street area are vulnerable to neglect and destruction, because they are largely unprotected by historic preservation ordinances. The portion of North Mesa Street which lies above the 300 block and portions of North Oregon and North Stanton Streets which run from downtown El Paso up to the medical centers and Kern Place on the mesa are not located in any official historic district.

The area which centers on North Mesa Street is a narrow chasm that falls between the protected areas of the Downtown, Sunset Heights, and Rio Grande Historic Districts, and Kern Place. These designated historic neighborhoods have more residential areas of concerned home owners, or they contain public buildings of historic interest. North Mesa has few owner residents, and its public buildings started out as private residences. The former residences on North Mesa Street are in areas which have become commercial zones. There are very few home-owning residents to push for historic district status and protection for this area.

Except for a handful of apartment buildings, the area has become primarily commercial office space. The exteriors of some of these commercially owned homes have been restored, but the interiors have been gutted or adapted to conform to modern office space. Real estate values for commercial use on North Mesa Street have increased and parking space is at a premium. As a result, many historic homes and buildings in this area will soon disappear. The North Mesa Street area is in great need of community and legal action to preserve its future and its past. Far too many of the mansions, apartment buildings, humble bungalows, and other historic structures on the street called "El Paso's Fifth Avenue" are now only memories.



*The dates under the photos refer to the date of the photography
which was done by the author.*



LAURA K. HOLLINGSIED was born in Leesville, Louisiana and graduated from Leesville High School. She attended the University of Texas at El Paso earning a B.A. in history followed by a M.A. also in history. She is also pursuing a second masters degree at the University of Texas at Austin and is working to be an archivist and librarian. Laura is presently employed in Special Collections at the University of Texas at El Paso where she is working on the Tom Lea Papers. She has processed the Burges-Perrenot Family Papers, the Cleofas Calleros Papers, and the Judge R.E. Thomason Papers.



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Them Was the Days: A Teenager on the Streets of Juárez During the 30s

By Oliver Osborn



My first memory of Juárez is of an event that took place when I was about five, probably in the early 20s. Mother and Father took me to lunch at Harry Mitchell's Mint Bar and I can distinctly remember the traffic mess when we looked for a place to park somewhere in downtown

Juárez. There was a street full of honking horns, several wagons, a policeman at an intersection continually blowing his whistle, and several other policemen trying to tell us where to park. Inside the restaurant, I remember that there was a long bar blanketed by men. At the side, there were tables at which we ate. After lunch we set out on foot to visit the market. On the way we passed the church building with its crosses on high steeples. My most colorful memory of the market was that there were some boys trying to sell us *piñatas* decorated with colored crepe paper. I also remember a huge pile of oranges stacked in the form of a giant cone.

My real introduction to Juárez came in the early 30s, when I was a sophomore at Austin High School. Several of us were riding around in a Model A Ford Roadster owned by John Palm. He suddenly announced that we were going to Juárez. Away we went, lickety-split down Santa Fe Street. We parked in a free lot near the bridge and walked across. John, who had been there before, promptly escorted us down the left side of Juárez Avenue to a bar. I later learned it was named the "Rio Grande." I also learned that it was more affectionately known as Steve's Place.

When John swung open the doors, there inside was a sight of wonder—a barroom full of kids having a good time. I recognized some of them from high school. John said that I could try a "Tom Collins" if I had fifteen cents. When I ordered it I felt that

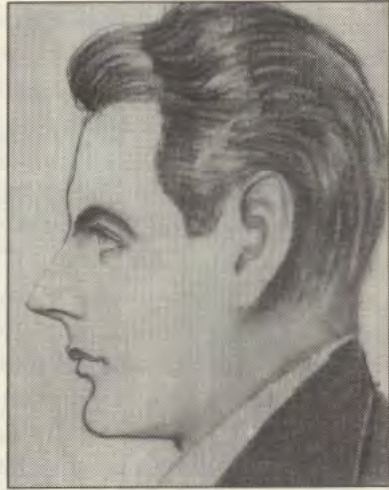
Steve knew that it was my first one. He was kind enough not to point it out. When I reached to pick up my drink I saw an unbelievable sight—there perched on a bottle at the back of the bar was a miniature owl. His wide eyes were focused on me and seemed to tell me that I was a stranger to him.

Not for long, however, was I a stranger. From that day on I visited the bar—frequently. The owl and I were soon on good terms. Assisting Steve behind the bar was a memorable young Mexican boy named “*Espejo*” (mirror). Incidentally we greeted each other some forty years later one night in La Corona Restaurant.

I soon found out that Juárez was the Friday and Saturday night gathering place for all of the teenagers in El Paso. If you stayed for a while in one spot you would see everyone that you ever knew. “Watering holes” in El Paso simply did not exist because the city was “dry.” The only other alternative was to go to Tom Burshell’s, some twenty-five miles to the north—across the line in New Mexico.

What a good deal this was! For fifty cents I could go to Juárez on a Friday or Saturday night and visit with all my friends. I was too shy to ask a girl for a date but here there was a chance to talk to a girl who was out of reach at school. I hesitate to mention them by name for fear of leaving someone out but I will—Jackie Sullivan, Pat Hull, Julia Walton, Rosa Mae Egbert, Adelle Johnson, Peggy Ramsey, Frances and Ellen Hord, Ellie Semple, Frances Dunn, Jane Grider, Louise Maxon, Margaret Kaffer and Louise Cooley.

Having mentioned the girls, I also will be fair and mention some of the boys: John Palm, Buddy Reynaud, Bill Adams, Ellis Mayfield, Jim Cleary, Allen Walker, Budgie Walker, Roy Jackson, Jack and Trevor McNutt, Ross and Lloyd Borrett, Jack and Bob Hazelton, Roy Chapman, Tom McKnight, Jack Niland, Randolph Dale, John McKee, Melvin Sellers, Bob and Dick Miller, Sammy Abdu, Connie Hinshaw and Hal Elder. All of these recollections bring pleasant memories of some dear and lifelong friends.



Sketch of the author made by a street artist in Juárez.

I further recall this was a low-budget group, anxious to get the most for what they had to spend. At 10:30 on Saturday nights many of us gathered around the big oval bar at the Tivoli so that we could get a glimpse of the floor show in the adjacent dining room where there was a cover-charge. Then at 11:00 o'clock we could march across the street to the Lobby #2 to see the floor show there. Later, the Lobby #2 foiled us by partitioning the bar from the dance floor.

At times we would go into additional territory a block or two beyond the Rio Grande Bar. There we found the China Palace and a grand piano located in an underground bar. Along the way there would always be a boy peddling very fragrant single gardenias for corsages. I could not figure out how he obtained them year round. Perhaps the most fun of all was to visit a little bar on the west side of the street where a father and his four sons played a marimba all evening—almost without stopping.

Even after I left El Paso to attend Texas A & M, I always came back to Juárez during the Christmas holidays to see my friends. Most of them were still there or had come home for the holidays as I did. I remember walking down the street one night wearing my A & M uniform. There on the street was the old troubadour, "Canacas," who had for many years entertained us on the street with his elaborate harmonica to which were attached two bells and a miniature washboard which he stroked with a stick. As soon as he saw me, he broke out with a vigorous rendition of the Aggie War Hymn.

One year during this period, the Sun Queen's Coronation Ball was held in the City Hall in downtown Juárez and I had the privilege of escorting the Princess of Tucumcari, New Mexico. I can also recall during the cold nights of the holidays when I stood at the big oval bar at the Tivoli watching the head barkeeper make hot Tom and Jerrys. I can still picture him blending sugar into egg yolks and then beating the whites into a white froth which went on top of the final concoction.

It was surprising to me that our parents seemed to approve of this social system. I can truthfully say that all through those years, I never saw a girl drunk or one who was not escorted by a boy. Only very occasionally did I see a boy drunk. Being on the streets of Juárez at night seemed about as safe to us as being in our living rooms at home.



*John Palm's Model A Ford.
Left to right: John Palm, Jack McNutt, Jim Clary.*

Many times I have retold the story now about the wonderful environment and good times I enjoyed as a teenager in El Paso. I am convinced that there was no other city in the entire world that has ever had a teenage culture that could compare with this one.

Is it possible that the great camaraderie that developed among the young people of the 30s and 40s is the fuel that has fired such dynamic organizations as the El Paso County Historical Society and the *Comadres*—and maybe even the wonderful eggnog parties that still brighten El Paso's holiday season?

OLIVER OSBORN is a native El Pasoan. His grandfather, Dr. Alward White was one of the first doctors to come here in the 1870s, while his uncle, Owen P. White, is the author of *Out of the Desert*, the first history of El Paso. His great uncle, W. Floyd Payne, served as mayor, completing the unexpired term of Robert Johnson. Floyd Payne was the donor to the city of the "Mule Car" which was for years located at the corner of Missouri and El Paso Streets. Oliver was a student at Austin High School when the events described in this article took place. He earned a degree in chemical engineering at Texas A & M University and made his career with The Dow Chemical Company at Freeport, Texas.





*This 16,000 pound of Gunnison granite was used for the El Paso Drilling contests. It is now at Memorial Park, corner of Copper and Grant.
Photo by W.E. DeBusk*



Hard Rock Drilling Contests

By Will E. DeBusk



he railroads brought more to El Paso than transport, even though there was little significant mining in the immediate area, El Paso became an important mining center shortly after the railroads arrived. By the late 1890s, El Paso was a major rail hub. Rail service extended to the

north serving mines in New Mexico and Colorado; to the south serving mines in Chihuahua; to the west serving mines in Arizona; and to the east. This allowed the shipment of supplies to El Paso and then on to the mines; the shipping of ore from the mines to refineries in El Paso; and the refined product to market.

In the early 1900s El Paso's major industries were cattle and farming, however, mining was also an important economic factor. The City Directory for 1904 listed two smelters, ten mining companies, six independent mining engineers, three mining machinery companies, and three mining supply companies. Mining was, indeed, a major employer. El Pasoans were quite interested in the mining industry as attested to by the almost daily mining news articles in the newspapers.

Early El Pasoans also enjoyed a good time, and what could be better than to have a carnival? In 1899 a committee was appointed to plan and hold a midwinter carnival in January of 1900. Unfortunately at this time, the merchants thought the cost too high, and the committee was unsuccessful in gaining the support of enough merchants to finance a carnival. In 1902, however, the outlook had brightened, and the committee met with success—and the first of four carnivals was held. The goal was to have attractions of wide interest in order to attract as many out-of-town visitors as possible. There were many fun-filled attractions, including parades, band

concerts, shotgun tournaments, diving horses, confetti battles, roping and bronco busting contests, the crowning of a queen, and the hard rock drilling contests.

WHY A ROCK DRILLING CONTEST?

In order to remove ore from the ground for transport to the smelter, the ore must be blasted into small pieces in order to move it from the mine to the railroad and then to the smelter. This was done by a process of drilling holes into the rock, inserting an explosive, and blasting. Before the advent of power drills, the holes were drilled by hand power—men using hammers to drive steel drill-rods into the rock. This was difficult and dangerous work requiring great strength, stamina, accuracy, and teamwork. The hard rock miners were proud of their drilling skills and eager to display them, particularly if there was fame and fortune to be gained.

Drilling contests were very popular in mining towns throughout the nation, and particularly in the West. These contests were held in towns such as Denver, Leadville, Cripple Creek in Colorado, and Bisbee, Arizona, as well as in El Paso. The contests allowed the best drillers to compete with their peers before large enthusiastic crowds, win large prizes, and gain a reputation as being the very best at what they did. The following excerpt from the November 14, 1905 *El Paso Herald* shows the popularity of these contests:

Rock drilling is the great sport of the West—a sport where trained muscles, a steady nerve, and a clear eye win against all odds, a sport in which practice makes



*The drill stone used in the drilling contests being moved to the contest site.
Photo by W.E. DeBusk*

perfect and perfection only comes to the men who work hard for it.

One who has never seen a drilling contest cannot understand the excitement it affords, the tensions to which the feelings can be wrought over a contest of this kind, or the enthusiasm it engenders in the spectators. The contest of man against man is one of skill and strength purely, and the quick stroke of the great hammer, the steady click of the steel drill as it cuts into the granite, make every drop of blood tingle.

WHAT IS A DRILLING CONTEST?

The object of the contest was to determine which man or team could, in a preset time, drill the deepest hole in the rock. The rock of choice was usually granite—a very hard rock. The rules were few but well understood by the contestants who had much input.

Three judges were selected, one of whom was appointed timekeeper. There were two categories of drillers—single-handed and double-handed. In the “single handed” contest one man held the drill *and* drove it with a hammer. The “double handed” contest involved a two man team—one guiding the drill and the other driving it with a hammer. The drillers could use drills of several lengths, but the drills had to be 7/8 inch in diameter. The hammer had to meet weight requirements—eight pounds for double handed teams.

The contest lasted fifteen minutes, then the timekeeper would announce that hammering must stop. If the hammer was in motion, that swing could be finished. If the drill penetrated an existing hole, that team must stop and a new hole would be started. The full fifteen minutes would be allowed for the redrill.

In the event of a tie, the solution was simple—“drill it over or divide the prize.” However, if a championship was involved and one team which was willing to “drill it over” but the other team was not, the team willing to “drill it over” was declared the winner.

THE MEN

Hard rock drillers were remarkable men. The profession they had chosen demanded hard physical labor, particularly if they worked in underground mines. They worked in cramped, dark tunnels with many potential dangers, including, but not limited to, cave-ins, flooding, premature or late detonation of the blasting explosive, and foul dirty air.

The men were physically impressive. The six best two-handed drillers averaged six feet tall and 200 pounds, which was well above the general average for the time. While they had to be in good physical condition to accomplish their day-to-day drilling jobs, they trained especially hard for contests. The training was followed closely as described by the November 14, 1905 *El Paso Herald*:

Great preparations are made for a contest. There is intense rivalry among the camps in the various sections of the country and money is waged freely. For weeks before the contest, the work of the champions of each camp is watched by their admirers and enthusiasm rises to a pitch well nigh indescribable.

The strength of the drillers was frequently and eloquently extolled by news reporters. A sample from the January 14, 1902 *El Paso Herald* tells us:

The champions, Malley and Chamberlain, stripped and displayed their arms of smooth white skin which encased muscles of steel. Their physical appearance had an inspiring effect on the audience. Because they were the favorites, at odds, by the sports, the people readily understood that these horny fisted sons of toil were not overrated.

THE STONE

A single block of granite from Gunnison, Colorado was used for each of the three drilling contests held in El Paso. The block was 4' by 4' by 6', the calculated weight is 16,000 pounds, and is "the hardest in the world."

More than a century after the first contest this block of granite, with almost 150 drill holes, is still in El Paso. It stands in Memorial Park, at the corner of Grant and Copper. At some time in the past, a corner of the block broke off along a line of drill holes which weakened that area. Mounted on the block is a Texas historical marker which describes the Federal Copper Company and the Manhattan Heights Historic District. Soon to be mounted on the block is another marker which will describe drilling contests in El Paso.

Interestingly, the blocks used for drilling contests took on a fame of their own. From the November 14, 1905 *El Paso Herald* we learn that:

The contests are the "shop" talk of the West. The history of a certain block of granite that has done duty for many contests is eagerly sought and as eagerly discussed; the number of records made in each particular block is known far and wide and there is an interest in it amounting almost to veneration. To desecrate it is worse than a breach of etiquette (sic). In El Paso there is a block of granite in which a world's record has been made and on which the drillers will try for another this week.

THE WINNERS: 1902

Hundreds of visitors came to El Paso from New Mexico, Arizona, Colorado, and Chihuahua to participate in the first Midwinter Carnival. The most distinguished visitors were Texas Governor Joseph D. Sayers and his wife and Chihuahua Governor Miguel Ahumada. Seven double-handed teams and seven single-handed drillers entered the contests. These men competed for over four days before enthusiastic crowds "numbering thousands."

Ed Chamberlain and Carl Malley were the crowd favorites in the double-handed category, and they actually won the contest, beating the Tarr Brothers by 1/16 inch. The wily Tarr Brothers, however, promptly challenged the winners to a special contest in which the winner takes the prize. Chamberlain and Malley foolishly accepted. In the "drill-off," the Tarr Brothers won by drilling almost two inches deeper into the granite, but did not beat the depth reached by Chamberlain and Malley in the first contest. The Tarr Brothers were declared the winners and were given the prize money of \$2500—equivalent to approximately \$52,000 in present-day purchasing power.

Two factors may have caused Chamberlain and Malley to lose the special contest. During the seventh minute, one of the drills came out of the hole with a small part of the cutting edge broken off. This piece of steel could have hampered the penetration of subsequent drills. The second factor, which could have been the cause of the broken drill was explained by Chamberlain. "We lost," said Chamberlain after the contest, "on account of our drills not being properly tempered. They refused to turn in the hole and stopped our progress."

It should not be forgotten how hazardous hand drilling is. The head of the man holding the drill, the "guider," is only inches from the path of the hammer. Any miscue by the man hammering, the "hammerer," can cause serious, if not fatal consequences. On

January 17, 1902, the *El Paso Herald* reported that while the Tarr Brothers were competing in the special contest, the crowd was stunned by the following event:

They made but two mislicks during the entire fifteen minutes, one of which was serious. During the last minute M. G. Tarr was struck a glancing blow on the head with the heavy hammer which dazed him for a second but he pluckily stuck to his work holding the drill. The blood ran over his face but he kept right on and took his turn with the hammer. His magnificent nerve won loud applause. He was not seriously hurt, but the blow was enough to knock most men out.

Other, not so serious incidents occurred during the special contest:

While the contest was taking place, a woman fainted, probably with excitement, and an effort to find a flask of whiskey in the crowd proved a failure. She was taken into a store and revived.

In the single handed contest, Richard Conley of Cripple Creek, Colorado was the favorite. He had won many previous drilling contests and was considered the world champion. He won this contest, beating Dan McGowan of Kingston, New Mexico by 3/4 of an inch.

The prize winners of the 1902 drilling contest were:

DOUBLE-HANDED

Name	Home	First Contest Depth	Special Contest Depth	Prize
M. G. Tarr H. R. Tarr	Globe, Arizona	40 5/16	39 3/8	\$2500
Edward Chamberlain Carl Malley	San Pedro, Mexico	40 3/8	37 1/4	Not Reported
Lundquist & Hups (Terrible Swedes)	Not Reported	Not Reported	Not Reported	Not Reported

SINGLE-HANDED

Name	Home	Depth	Prize
Richard Conley	Cripple Creek, Colorado	20	\$200
Dan McGowan	Kingston, New Mexico	19 1/4	\$100
Robert Lyons	Cripple Creek, Colorado	17 9/16	\$50

THE WINNERS: 1903

The 1903 drilling contests—both double-handed and single-handed—were the most momentous in the history of hard rock drilling contests. Two world records were set, both by impressive margins over the previous records. The headline and lead article of the January 13, 1903 *El Paso Herald* proudly proclaimed:

**Chamberlain and Make are the Champion
Granite Drillers of the Universe**

**Fred Yockey, of Boulder, Wins Championship
as the Greatest Single Hand Driller**

The second day of the drilling contest closed in a blaze of glory.

Two new records for the world.

Chamberlain and Make, drilling only 14 minutes, made 43 1/4 inches, beating the former world's record of 41 25/32, and Fred Yockey, of Boulder, Colo., wrested the single-handed championship from Richard Conley with a drill of 23 1/4 inches, another new record for the world.

These are occurrences that do not take place every day in the year, and will be big advertisements for El Paso.

It is declared the most successful drilling tournament ever held in the country and judging from the enthusiasm of the crowds and the large crowds in attendance, one could hardly believe otherwise.

The double-handed record set by Chamberlain and Make was particularly impressive as they stopped drilling after fourteen minutes, foregoing the final minute. The reason for this unexpected turn of events was soon explained in the *El Paso Herald* of January 13, 1903: "We won't do any more," said the striker, as he threw down the hammer. There was a pause—the crowd thought there was to be a dispute over the rules, or something of the sort. But

no. With a smile he added: "If we put her in any deeper there won't be any more matches, and anyhow there's not enough steel to hold onto."

Also impressive was the intensity of the effort and the closeness of the competition. Chamberlain and Make drilled almost 1 1/2 inches deeper than the previous record—43 1/4 inches versus 41 25/32 inches—and each of the top three double-handed teams drilled deeper than the 1902 winning team. The single-handed winner, Fred Yockey, drilled 1 3/4 inches deeper—23 1/4 versus 21 1/2—than the previous record held by Richard Conley, and the top two drillers drilled deeper than the 1902 winner.

As in the 1902 Carnival, large crowds attended. An estimated 10,000 people attended the Carnival—El Paso's population in 1903 was approximately 23,000—with 5,000 people watching the drilling contests. According to the *El Paso Herald* of January 10, 1903, one distinguished person did not attend:

WASHINGTON, Jan. 10—[New Mexico] Governor Otero will not attend the El Paso carnival, although his family will be there. He believes that statehood is of more interest just now than a carnival and he is here working with all his might to secure the passage of the omnibus bill.

The prize winners for the 1903 Drilling Contests were:

DOUBLE-HANDED

Name	Home	Depth	Prize
Edward Chamberlain Carl Make	San Pedro, Mexico	42 1/4 World Record	\$1000
Lundquist Hups	Not Reported	41 3/8	\$300
Carl Malley Wm. M Ross	Bisbee, Arizona	40	\$150

SINGLE-HANDED

Name	Home	Depth	Prize
Fred Yockey	Boulder, Colorado	23 1/4 World Record	\$250
Richard Conley	Cripple Creek, Colorado	20 5/16	\$100
Charles McGowan	Bisbee, Arizona	19	\$50

1904

A midwinter Carnival was held in 1904, but drilling contests were not included.

THE WINNERS: 1905

The 1905 drilling contest was held as a feature of the American Mining Congress convention held in November 1905 rather than as an attraction of the Mid-Winter Carnival. This contest consisted only of double-handed drilling. No single handed contests were reported in the newspapers of the time. The double-handed contest which was held, however, was reminiscent of the 1902 contest in that the winner of the scheduled contest eventually lost to the second place team.

The *El Paso Times* of November 17, 1905 reported that Chamberlain and Make drilled forty inches into the granite; however, near the end of the allotted time:

The final change was made a few seconds before the time expired, when Make took the hammer for the last blows. As the needle on his stop watch reached the limit, J. W. Fleming, the judge, leaned over and touched Make.

Make, however, continued to bring down his hammer. It was in the air when he was given the signal, and he brought down his hammer head three more times before it came to a pause. Instantly a cry went from the followers of the other teams that Make had exceeded the prescribed time. As three blows could not make any essential difference in the result, no action was taken by the judges, especially since no formal protest was filed.

The Page Brothers, Louis and Mark, finished second with 39 13/16 inches, only 3/16 inch less than the winner, said the *El Paso Morning Times* on November 18, 1905. Although no protest had been made:

. . . the judges got to thinking the matter over and decided that they had better reserve their decision until they had given the matter the most careful investigation. Accordingly at 3 o'clock yesterday afternoon the

The 1905 drilling contest was held as a feature of the American Mining Congress convention held in November 1905 rather than as an attraction of the Mid-Winter Carnival.



Edward Chamberlain and Carl Make competing in the 1905 El Paso Midwinter Carnival drilling contest. They won the scheduled event but lost in the "drill off." Photo by W. E. DeBusk

judges held a meeting and decided to call the contest a draw and call for a new contest between Chamberlain and Make and [the] Page brothers to decide the winners of first and second prize, the same to take place this morning.

The judges reached their decision using the following reasoning: Chamberlain and Make used 1,050 blows to drill forty inches, which was $\frac{3}{16}$ inch deeper than the Page brothers had drilled. Forty inches divided by 1,050 blows equals $\frac{1}{27}$ inch penetration per blow. That multiplied by four additional blows equals $\frac{4}{27}$ inch penetration after the allotted time. Subtracting $\frac{4}{27}$ from $\frac{3}{16}$ "brings the judges to decide on a fraction between $\frac{1}{16}$ and $\frac{1}{32}$ of an inch which in our opinion is entirely too close."

Additional money was found to be added to the original prizes. All four teams competed in the redrill, but only the teams of Chamberlain and Make and the Page Brothers were eligible for the first prize. The Page Brothers won the match and were awarded first prize.

The prize winners for the 1905 drilling contest were:

DOUBLE-HANDED

Name	Home	First Contest Depth	Special Contest Depth	Prize
Louis Page Mark Page	Bisbee, Arizona	39 13/16	40 3/16	\$1250
Edward Chamberlain Carl Make	Dos Cabezas, Mexico	40	39 7/8	\$700
Bradshaw McIvor	Bisbee, Arizona	39 5/16	39 5/8	\$350

Drilling contests were held throughout the West. The results of some of the double-handed contests are shown below:

Chamberlain and Andregg Denver, 1897 38 3/8 inches	Chamberlain and Andregg Cripple Creek, 1899 37 1/2 inches	Chamberlain and Andregg Leadville, 1899 39 1/2 inches
Chamberlain and Malley Leadville, 1901 40 1/2 inches	Tarr Brothers El Paso, 1902 39 3/8 inches	McNichols and Ross Bisbee, 1902 41 25/32 inches
Chamberlain and Make Bisbee, 1903 46 5/16 inches Not in Gunnison granite	Chamberlain and Make El Paso, 1903 43 1/4 inches in 14 minutes World Record	Page Brothers San Francisco, 1905 42 3/4 inches Unknown Stone
Page Brothers El Paso, 1905 40 3/16 inches		

EPILOGUE

Hand drilling at the time of the El Paso drilling contests was fast overtaken by technology. The introduction of power drilling equipment allowed fewer men to drill more holes in a shorter time, thus increasing production and lowering costs. It also reduced the need for skilled hand drillers such as the ones who competed in drilling contests throughout the country. While the individual men may not have been displaced by power drills, their hard-learned skills were lost to the generations of miners who followed them.

I have been unable to find any drilling contests held after the 1905 El Paso contest. It is likely that the world records set at the 1903 El Paso Carnival have never been surpassed and are still world records after more than a century.

WILL E. DeBUSK retired as a supervisory missile engineer after thirty-six years employment at White Sands Missile Range. He holds a bachelor of science degree in mechanical engineering and a master of arts degree in public administration. He is a member and past chairman of the El Paso County Historical Commission and was a member and chairman of the of advisory board of the El Paso Museum of History. He was a member of the bond committee which was responsible for getting the Museum of History bond issue (among others) approved for public vote by the mayor and city council. He was also a member of the 2000 Bond Campaign steering committee which successfully guided the development and promotion of the bond campaign with resulted in passage of all the bond issues.



Early Cowboys in New Mexico Chased More than Cows

By Paxton Price



eginning with 1860, if not earlier, Southern New Mexico had more operating mines than did the northern counties of the Territory. The previous gold rush in California raised the curiosity of settlers and of the population of the states east of the Mississippi River. The southwest

and west of the growing country of the United States was being promoted and developed. Fortunately, the gold rush helped the nation's Manifest Destiny succeed, but the gold discovery in California couldn't accommodate all those who invaded that territory.

The would-be prospectors and miners who became that country's surplus started rambling back toward their home states. Not only was the southern portion of New Mexico being a travel territory for prospectors but others such as cow men and ranchers were roving over New Mexico's hills and mountains. Cows wander and so those hired to keep track of them do also. At least two of them, plus some others have discovered rich mining lodes.

George Lufkin was one of those who had learned to chase cows. He was looking for some strays in the rolling country near Hillsboro. He stopped searching to tighten the girth of his saddle and while doing so he spied a rock under his horse that looked as if it would contain some precious metal ore. He picked it up, looked at it, pocketed it, and when he returned to Hillsboro he had it assayed. The result was startling. The report of the assay showed a thousand ounces of silver per ton of rock. Silver was then worth \$1.29 per ounce. Lufkin had noted the place where he had found the "float" which was on the edge of the later—discovered site that

became the Bridal Chamber. That site was the most remarkable body of silver ever uncovered in New Mexico and unequaled in the world.

Reports disclose that he realized only twenty-five to fifty thousand dollars for his find, while the Bridal Chamber in other hands yielded over three million dollars in pure silver, which was referred to as "horn silver." With his earnings Lufkin went back east to his home and married. Upon his return to Lake Valley, Lufkin went into an easier vocation than mining. He opted for the real estate business. Lufkin had made a bad choice, for he soon was penniless and eventually died at Lake Valley where he was buried by the county.

That was only one of the stories about the Bridal Chamber.

A second story about the finding of the fabulously rich concentration of silver involved Lufkin also. This story alleges that he was a New Englander and a railroad man. As horses were ridden in those days, it was natural for someone like Lufkin to claim to be a cowboy. Ranching was spreading. Lufkin had drifted into Hillsboro and there he joined forces with another drifter, Chris Watson. Lufkin previously had a job in Santa Rita where he gained some knowledge of mining. Wandering over that country these two rovers arrived in Georgetown, another rich silver mining site. While bending their elbows at the Green Onion Bar, they were rewarded with the presence of a Chinese "sometime-pro prospector" who was showing a piece of black metal "float" to the drinkers. They were all excited but did nothing about the Chinaman's mysterious find. Our two friends, who were lacking financial resources, pressed the Chinese as to where he had found the sample rock. They consulted a map and found the site which was in the vicinity of the place where Lufkin had picked *his* rock up under his horse. Lufkin and Watson marked the site and returned to Hillsboro. There the two would-be prospectors had to secure jobs in order to explore their site of their "find." Upon earning enough to purchase shovels and picks in addition to a wagon and team, they returned to the area where they "found the float."

They dug enough to fill half of the wagon and returned to Hillsboro. They showed their wagon load of one half ton of ore and promptly sold it for \$1500 to a knowing miner.

They had dug in Lake Valley where prospectors and miners were prowling around the site. A mine financing firm bought

their claim and until equipment could arrive the buyer laid out some claims in the site to rent. Meanwhile Lufkin went back east to get married, but he did return.

One of the rental claims was selected by John Leavitt, a local blacksmith. He had selected the rental claim that Lufkin and Watson had dug into but abandoned. Leavitt continued digging in the abandoned hole and after reaching a depth of ten feet, he broke into a solid silver cavern. The cavern was twenty-six feet wide and twelve feet deep. Unknowingly, Leavitt sold-out for a few thousand dollars to a financing company which named the breakthrough the "Bridal Chamber." It proved to be bigger than first thought and produced 2,500,000 ounces of horn silver. Geologists called the fantastic concentration of solid silver a geologic blowout. The result was a "blowout" of miners and population in Lake Valley. Claims were registered for five miles around the village. A railroad spur was laid from Nutt station in 1884 to haul away the ores produced. So much wealth lay about that two city marshals were employed. The Bridal Chamber furnished one chunk of silver that had been sawed out which was worth \$80,000.

Lake Valley is once again a vacant site but the Bridal Chamber yawns at a fenced opening.

PAXTON P. PRICE is a retired executive and army officer. He spent his boyhood in Doña Ana County and attended public schools there. He attended New Mexico Military Institute and graduated from George Peabody College in Tennessee. He has authored the *International Book and Library Activities: The History of a U.S. Foreign Policy; An Index to Black American Artists; Mesilla Valley Pioneers 1823-1912; and Pioneers of the Mesilla Valley*. He has written many articles on southern New Mexico which have been published in *Password*. Paxton Price is now retired and resides in Las Vegas, New Mexico.





Book Reviews

***Ghost Towns Alive: Trips to New Mexico's Past.* By Linda G. Harris. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2003. Paperback \$19.95; hardback \$39.95.**

If you have never strayed from the major highways or the interstates, there is a joy awaiting you of which you must partake before time, wind, and rain take them from view. There are some enchanting places that you will find if you are imbued with a wonderful curiosity and the nerve to leave the highway for a "dirt" road that disappears into the horizon and seems to lead nowhere.



Linda Harris has taken those roads and has done some wonderful investigating as well as some historical research for us, and makes fascinating and inviting those little-known places which contributed so much to our history and progress. She has given us a really complete book which includes directions on how to arrive at a town—directions which are found nowhere else:

Jicarilla is 10.6 miles northeast of White Oaks. Take the left fork leading north from White Oaks onto A 041. This U.S. Forest Service road is dirt but well maintained. The schoolhouse is on the left about a mile before Jicarilla. Take the left fork just past the school to the town site.



Linda G. Harris, author

She introduces each town with a brief but colorful history of the town and some of its more colorful occupants and events. The captions for most of the pictures are a mini-history lesson in themselves. Where available she also gives a description of what can be seen and/or visited in the town, the fee or the cost, and a phone number and web sight:

Shakespeare . . . the ghost town is open for tours some weekends, with living history performances four times a year.

Fee. (505) 542-9034;
www.shakeskpeareghosttown.com.
 (202)

It would not do for me to try to describe all or even some of the towns named and described in this wonderful book, suffice it to say that this book is one that must be part of your library and the paperback has a place in your glove-box. Just the map (xiii), which is complete with a scale, is worth the price of the book.

Linda Harris does a wonderful job of describing those towns and the photographs she has assembled, some historical, some taken in the present by Pamela Porter, surely give an excellent picture of some wonderful and almost mystical places to visit in New Mexico.

Because I have not investigated any of these wonderful little towns since the early 60s (when my children were young enough to follow me wherever I chose to go!) I have been enchanted reading about the towns that I saw as just a collection of dilapidated structures—some remain that way, but some have been revitalized with an influx of painters, sculptors, “antiqueers,” retirees, and even some young professionals who “commute,” and I am anxious to go back to see what Linda Harris has so brilliantly described. My appetite has been whetted—as will be yours.

MCG

***El Cerrito, New Mexico: Eight Generations in a Spanish Village.* By Richard L. Nostrand. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2003. Cloth, \$39.95**

El Cerrito is a small, isolated village in the Upper Pecos River area of New Mexico. As a graduate student in the early 1940s, Nostrand had read what became a classic study of the village. Eventually, notes the author, there were sixteen publications on El Cerrito. It must not be that isolated a place but the author does describe the difficulty he had in finding it in 1980.

Returning to El Cerrito in 1980, Nostrand intended to study the village and four other villages “as case studies in Spanish



Pamela Porter, photographer

population shifts since 1940." (xvi) Having returned over one hundred times since (sometimes accompanied by university students) and used the village as a "window to Spanish people in New Mexico," the author decided it was such an important place that it merited its own separate study. (ibid.)

Since its founding shortly after Mexican independence, Nostrand identifies eight generations each of twenty-five years who have lived in El Cerrito. His sources are land grant records, church records and, especially, oral interviews. The book is divided into chapters named for the "major challenges" each generation faced: for example, to construct a fortified settlement for protection (1824); to increase profits by expanding livestock activities (1875); to survive by moving to and taking jobs in cities (1950).

Tables, maps, genealogical charts, and photographs throughout the book support the text.

This is micro-history at its best. It is a story of survival in spite of nature, government, family feuds, and encroachment by the outside world.

Richard Baquera
Department of History,
El Paso Community College

***Kit Carson and His Three Wives—A Family History.* By Marc Simmons. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2003. ISBN 0-8263-3296-X. \$24.95, Cloth.**

Kit Carson is a name well-known in Western United States history. It is so well recognized in fact that Carson's reputation has been subjected to the revisionist "politicking of much of formal history in the late twentieth century." (vii) Consequently, laments the author, "Carson's reputation became blackened by the hurling of such epithets as genocidal racist, butcher of the Indians, and the Western Hitler." (vii)—and that is how many today remember Kit Carson.

This monograph represents, in part, an attempt by Simmons to change that revisionist image—one the author feels is not entirely justified. Carson's contemporaries admired and respected him and recent studies have done much to change attitudes about Kit Carson.

Thus the other motive for this book on Carson. "In spite of a great deal of past research and publications," Simmons writes, "there still exist precincts within Carson's life story that remain locked in shadow and surrounded by confusion." (viii) It is this

side—his family life—that is the subject of this book. It is a side the author believes “has been passed over lightly or even ignored by most previous biographers.” (ix)

In a life “crowded with extraordinary episodes,” the author addresses the subject of Carson’s three wives “in an attempt to show Kit’s struggle to become a settled family man . . .” (ix) and in this manner, counter the “Western Hitler” image. The problem is that Kit Carson never mentioned much about his family. Simmons had to glean whatever information he could from other written works, correspondence, and memoirs.

Waa-Nibe, the Arapaho first wife of Carson died apparently in childbirth or from smallpox only three years after her marriage to Carson. The “pretty, energetic (if stubborn)” second wife was Making-Out-Road, a Cheyenne. She was his spouse, concludes Simmons, because besides being pretty, she belonged to an elite Cheyenne band and was well-connected at Bent’s Fort. This relationship ended after only fourteen months when the woman threw Carson and his belongings out of her home.

The majority of the book is devoted to Carson’s third and longest-lasting marriage. In 1843, Kit Carson married fourteen-year-old Josefa Jaramillo of Taos. Despite efforts to make the Jaramillos into a family worthy of marriage ties to Carson, the author notes that actually the family was not that high on the *nuevomejicano* socio-economic scale, although it was related to the Vigil family. At this point the author includes an interesting discussion about the increasing numbers of inter-marriage between Anglo-Americans and *nuevomejicano* families and its social impact on the region—a subject Rebecca Craver spot-lighted in her Southwest Studies publication *The Impact of Intimacy*.

The four chapters of the marriage to Josefa comprise the years of the war and its consequences for the area—but especially its impact on the Native Americans. This is the period when Carson is more directly involved with the tribes.

Josefa died rather suddenly in 1868 to be followed in death by her husband not that much later. At his death Carson’s seven surviving children were nearly destitute. In some of his correspondence with friends, Carson regretted that he couldn’t spend more time with his family.

What is left now is for someone to investigate the story of his children.

Richard Baquera
Department of History,
El Paso Community College

The Indian Texans by James M. Smallwood; *The Mexican Texans* by Phyllis McKenzie; *The African Texans* by Alwyn Barr; *The European Texans* by Allan O. Kownslar; *The Asian Texans* by Marilyn Dell Brady. *Texans All* General Editor, Sara R. Massey. Published for the Institute of Texan Cultures by Texas A & M University Press, College Station, 2004. \$29.95 Cloth; \$10.95 paper except *The European Texans*, \$12.95 paper.

When the Institute of Texan Cultures opened in San Antonio in 1968, one of its publications was an "ethnic pamphlet" series about the various cultures/ethnic groups which called themselves "Texans." Thirty years later it was decided that the publications needed to be revised and given a "fresh look" (Foreword). The objective was to have each volume summarize and provide examples "of the social and cultural contributions made by the major groups immigrating to Texas rather than the traditional historical chronologies that focused on politics, wars, and great men." (Ibid.) The volumes vary in length, but each focuses on the five distinct cultural groups that "already existed in Texas before statehood or that came to Texas in the early twentieth century." (Ibid.) Each volume is organized differently according to regions or group—a pattern dictated by the content or culture being analyzed. *The European Texans*, for example, is organized by European regions. A map of Texas at the beginning of each volume is adapted to reflect the particular culture being discussed. Finally, each also has a bibliography at the end which educators will find helpful.

The Institute's extensive oral history and photographic collections are spot-lighted throughout through the use of side bars or boxed sketches which sometimes are more interesting than the text itself. The photographs include many not usually included in other works.

The Indian Texans, organized by region, seems too abbreviated and aimed at a high school audience. But, then, these are meant as introductions to the topic and not as in-depth studies. Both *The Mexican Texans* and *The African Texans* are better—the side bars especially focus on well-known and not so well-known *tejanos*. Several El Pasoans are included in both—Dr. Lawrence Nixon, for example. The longest volume focuses on the many European immigrant groups who came to Texas—there are twenty discussed to varying degrees in this volume. An extra feature in this volume is a recipe typical of what people of that group would have prepared. *The Asian Texans* focuses on immigrant groups from the Pacific. Some might believe that these are relatively

recent arrivals but actually Chinese were introduced as railroad workers in the 19th Century. In this volume, the author used El Paso oral history interviews and articles from *Password* to include discussions about the Chew family, Chinese schools, and Japanese farming in the El Paso area.

Overall these are good, if sometimes short, introductions to the various ethnic groups which today comprise the population of the second most-populated state in the United States.

Richard Baquera
Department of History,
El Paso Community College

***A Texas Anthology: Lone Star Literature from the Red River to the Rio Grande.* Editor and Introduction by Don Graham. Foreword by Larry McMurtry. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2003. Cloth, \$29.95.**

This seven hundred-plus page anthology "seeks to provide through fiction, autobiography, and a few discursive essays an overview of the diversity, excellence, and characteristic types of Texas writing." (18) The editor realized that certain parameters needed to be established. Consequently, this collection focuses on a century of Texas writing from roughly 1903 to 2003. He explains that 1903 was chosen because it was a watershed year nationally. Realism predominated in literature, for example. And Texas was still close to a frontier area—thus the inclusion of O. Henry.

Generally this book is chronologically organized. Graham decided that whole works would be better than using "cuttings" or portions of works. Consequently, whatever is here can't be too long. The selections are further organized by region—South, Border, etc. El Paso representatives include Ben Saenz and Pat Carr.

You might want to glance through this one first before you decide to purchase it. The selections might not all appeal to everyone and you might not want to spend that much money on this one book. Someone seems to have had a good idea but I'm not sure it succeeded in this case.

Richard Baquera
Department of History,
El Paso Community College



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Marilyn Gross, editor

P.O. Box 28 • El Paso, Texas 79940

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