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THE EL PASO COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
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THE EL PASO COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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ARTICLES APPEARING IN THIS JOURNAL ARE ABSTRACTED AND INDEXED IN **HISTORICAL ABSTRACTS** and **AMERICA: HISTORY AND LIFE**

Password

VOLUME 49, NO. 4
WINTER, 2004
EL PASO, TEXAS

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EL PASO COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Anniversary
1954-2004

FORTY-FOURTH
HALL OF HONOR BANQUET

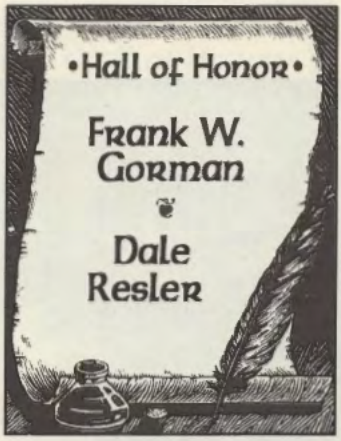
Camino Real Hotel
Sunday, November 7, 2004

All photos in this publication not otherwise credited are from the archives of the El Paso County Historical Society.

Entered as periodical mail at El Paso, Texas

• Hall of Honor •
2004

Hall of Honor

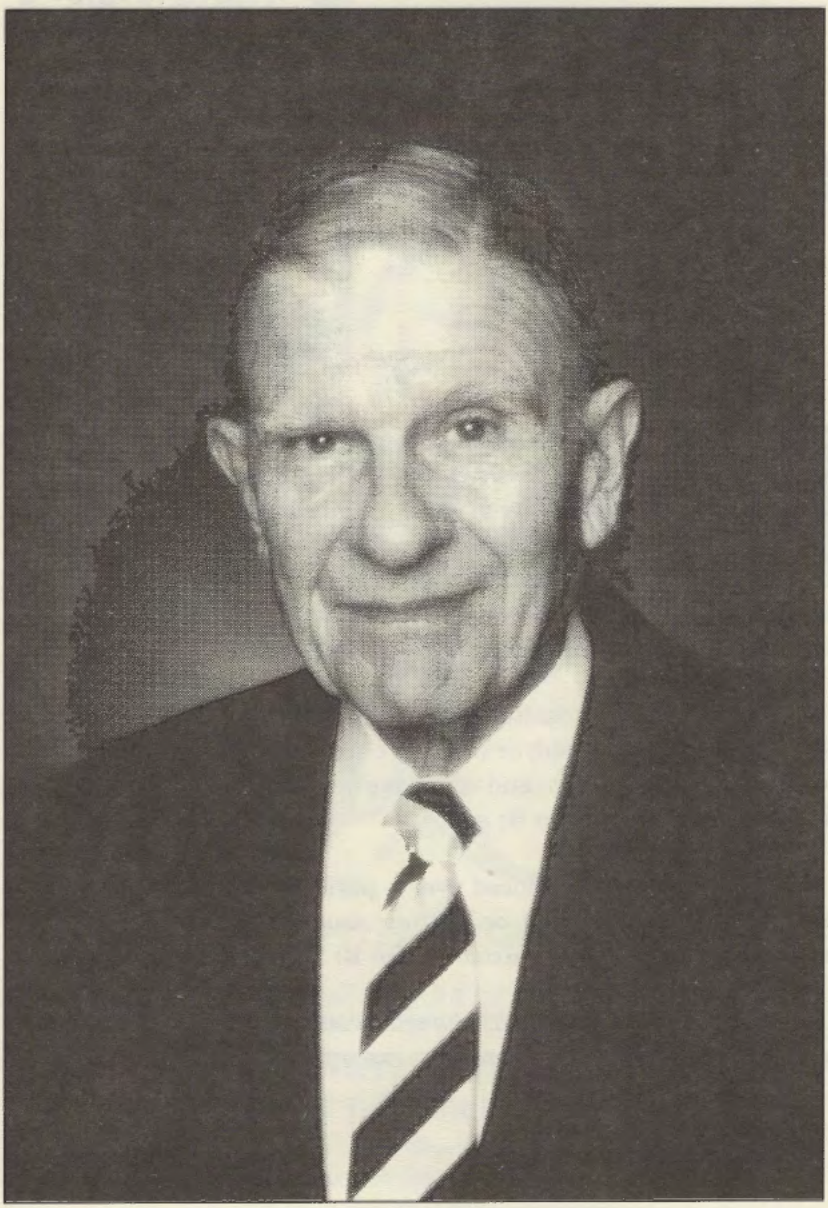


The El Paso County Historical Society first named honorees in 1961. This has become an annual tradition and the dinner at which those honored are named and celebrated has become an annual event. The criteria for selection to the Hall of Honor are that "It shall be composed of outstanding men and women of character, vision, courage, and creative spirit, who have lived in what is presently El Paso County:

"1. who have consistently done the unusual which deserves to be written or recorded; or who have created that which deserves to be read; heard or seen; and who have made El Paso County better for their having lived in it; and

"2. who have influenced over a period of years the course of history of El Paso County, or by their singular achievements have brought honor and recognition to the El Paso community; and

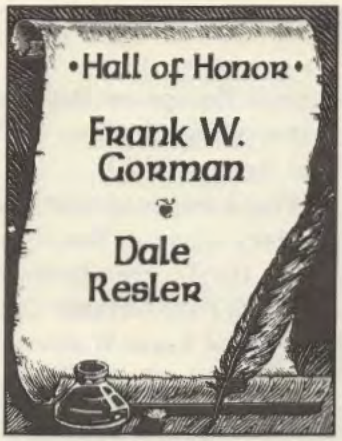
"3. who have directed us towards worthy goals and meant [sic] being remembered by all men as an exemplary guide to our future."



Frank W. Gorman

• Hall of Honor •
2004

Frank W. Gorman



Frank W. Gorman Jr. is a native El Pasoan, born on June 20, 1924 to Frank and Eloise Gorman. Frank attended St. Patrick's Parochial School and graduated from El Paso High School in 1941. He entered Texas A & M in 1941 where he remained until 1943. During World War II he served in the navy as a pilot from 1943 to 1945. In 1948 he graduated from New Mexico State University with the degree of bachelor of science in electrical engineering.

While still a student at NMSU, he married Barbara Dodson of Ysleta in 1947. He entered into business with his father in 1948 as a manufacturer's representative selling high voltage electrical equipment. He assisted the company's expansion in Albuquerque, Phoenix, and Mexico City, where he and Barbara lived for six months. He and his brother, Arthur, acquired the company from their father in 1963.

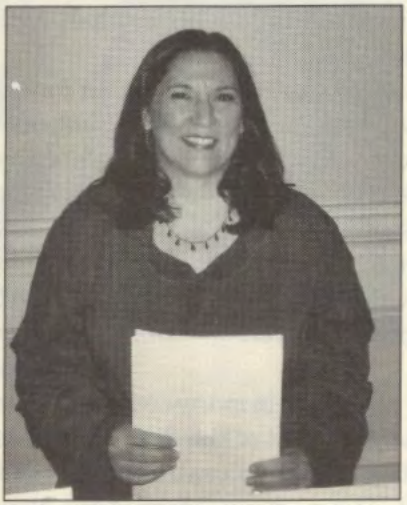
Frank was a Rotarian for thirty-nine years and a long-time active member of the Republican Party. He served as a delegate to two national Republican conventions. A lifetime member of St. Patrick's Cathedral, he also has been an active member of the St. Vincent de Paul Society working for the needy for forty-five years. He and Barbara have two sons, Patrick and Michael and two daughters, Susan Wilson and Nancy Fox. They also have seven grandchildren.

Active in many civic and business organizations, Frank served as president of the Sun Bowl Association, and as such, signed the first television contract with the Columbia Broadcasting System. He is a past president of the New Mexico State University Foundation, St. Patrick's Parochial School Board, and of the National

Electrical Equipment Representatives Association. Frank is a past director of the Chamber of Commerce, and of the Southwest National Bank.

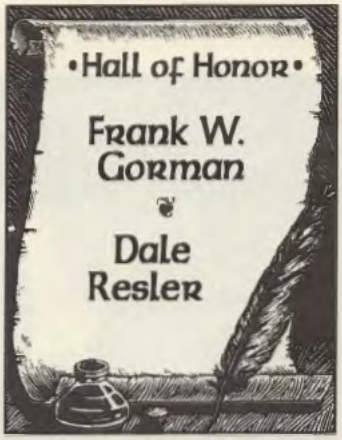
Frank serves currently as the chairman of the El Paso Museum of History Advisory Board and of the Socorro Mission Restoration Project. He is currently the director of St. Patrick's Parish Council and the El Paso Catholic Diocese Finance Committee. A commissioner of the Texas Historical Commission, he presently serves as chairman of the Texas Court House Restoration Committee. Traveling to all parts of Texas, he inspects historic court houses to determine their qualifications for financial assistance in historic restoration. Frank has been a member of the El Paso County Historical Society for many years, and has served the Society as a director, vice-president, and president.

Lillian Crouch
Banquet Co-chairman



Lisa Brown
Banquet Co-chairman

• Hall of Honor •
2004



Dale Resler, Philanthropist

By Bonnie Resler Karlsrud

Dale Resler was born near Oden, Indiana in 1899, "was raised in a traditional Germanic fashion and was encouraged in all he attempted."[1] Dale's mother died when he was three years of age. By 1908, his family was "homesteading" in eastern Colorado. The family of Nona Henry "homesteaded" in the same area. In 1922 Dale and Nona married and settled into farm life. The local farmers produced dairy products that were welcome in the city of Denver and Dale started trucking the farmers' products to Denver, returning by way of Akron, Colorado. Their first child, Wayne, was born in 1926 and daughter Bonnie was born in 1930.[2]

Dale became aware of a situation in Silver City, New Mexico—the miners needed transportation from Silver City to the mines. Resler saw an opportunity and seized it. He purchased a "stretch sedan" and began to advertise his services. He took the family and moved them from Colorado to Silver City. He next worked for a bus company, then with a partner bought Rio Grande Stages. In 1932 Dale became aware of a bankrupt coach line that provided transportation from El Paso, Texas to the spectacular marvel, Carlsbad Caverns. Dale, Nona, and their two children, Wayne and Bonnie, moved to El Paso. This was the beginning of Carlsbad Caverns Coaches and the story of Dale and Nona Resler in El Paso—a story that lasted almost seventy years.

Dale became a member of the El Paso Chamber of Commerce where he met Chris Fox. They became good friends—an association that lasted for more than forty years. In 1938, by now a "seasoned" transportation owner, Dale established a branch of the Gray Line Sightseeing Company which brought in large tours by train to see Carlsbad Caverns, El Paso, and Juárez. He also owned

Dale Resler, Philanthropist
February 4, 1899 – May 6, 1976

and operated many other transportation oriented businesses: Carlsbad Caverns Coaches, Resler Truck Line, and El Paso White Truck Sales and Welding Supply.[3]

The family joined Trinity Methodist Church where Dale quickly became involved with the activities of the church and with the Boy Scouts. Dale went from the Board of Stewards at Trinity, to being selected as "Top Churchman of the Year" by the El Paso

Council of Churches in 1958. Trinity named their new educational building Resler Hall in 1965. While Wayne was a boy scout in Troop 24, his father and Coke Williamson, the boy scout executive, became good friends. For his great dedication to boy scouting, a new boy scout camp in Cloudcroft, New Mexico was named Camp Dale Resler in 1958.

Bonnie Resler Karlsrud

Dale was dedicated to the development of the city of El Paso. He started by being appointed as an alderman to fill a vacancy in 1942. He served for four years, then went on the City Planning Commission for fourteen years where he worked hard with water acquisition and the stable development of the expansion of the city. He then became a member of the Highway Coordinating Committee where he helped implement the present freeway system. In appreciation of this work, a vital link from the I-10 to North Mesa and beyond was named Resler Drive.[4]

Together with these accomplishments, Dale also served on executive committees and boards of the Community Chest, Family Welfare Association, the Girl Scouts, Lydia Patterson Institute, the Salvation Army, the United Fund, the YMCA, and he had a special passion for the Southwestern Children's Home. He was on the board of the State National Bank and Mountain States Telephone Company. He was a Rotarian for 39 years and a 32nd Degree Knight Commander of the Scottish Rite.

The accolades given upon his death showed the extensive admiration and respect for this man. On his death, Pete Lee, editor of the *Herald Post* wrote:

> Some men lead by virtue of high office; others lead by example. Dale Resler was in the latter category. Only rarely did he accept the spotlight of the many organizations in which he served. Yet for all that, Dale Resler was a powerhouse in every movement of which he was a part. When he talked, others listened. The work he performed was matched only by his generosity. . . and there was no way to measure how many lives he touched or how

> many people he helped through his service and gifts. His death removed from the El Paso scene a man who cannot be replaced.

Jack Guynes wrote:

> An unassuming man, he quietly served El Paso, the city that he loved, with both his time and his generosity. Never a seeker of publicity, much of his generosity and efforts for the people and city of El Paso went unnoticed and unrecorded. Dale Resler did more in any one year for El Paso than most El Pasoans do in a lifetime.

Jake Ross, Boy Scout executive wrote:

> He came out of the lowlands of Colorado as a bus driver with his own personal mountains to climb. Few men in climbing their mountains have touched as many with kindness, generosity, and understanding as did this man. For as he climbed his mountain, he never forgot his fellow climbers, and with quiet dignity helped them in their own climb. He walked with leaders throughout his life, and by his own choosing, stayed slightly to the left and one step behind . . . yet he was the greater leader of them all. His stay upon this land left El Paso a far better place for his having been here. He was a great scout!

Of all the tributes, awards, and honors bestowed upon Dale Resler during his lifetime, the one tribute that had never been done before nor since, stands out above all. At the funeral service, hundreds of Cub Scouts, Boy Scouts, Eagle Scouts, and Scout Leaders gathered across the street from the church. Standing on the curb on North Mesa Street in full uniform, the scouts lined up shoulder to shoulder for blocks along the street. Each one saluted as the funeral procession passed.

NOTES

1. http://www.epcc.edu/ftp/Homes/monica w/borderland/22_dale%20_resler.htm. (Hereafter www.epcc.edu)
2. Bonnie Karlsrud is now in the process of compiling information about her family with the intention of publishing a book.
3. www.epcc.edu
4. With the completion of a new link, Resler Drive now stretches from the freeway through newer as well as older residential areas to Transmountain Road.

McKnight on Gorman

A short talk by Frank McKnight commemorating Frank Gorman's induction into the El Paso County Historical Society's Hall of Honor.

I almost have a diabolical pleasure in saying nice things about Frank Gorman. He certainly won't say them about himself and I know that he is squirming in his chair and hoping that there were some way to get off this platform and have this program end before it even begins.

Frank Gorman has done many good deeds for his church, the historical entities, and for the people of El Paso, albeit quietly and without fanfare. Even Frank's many good friends are unaware of his accomplishments for his church and the good of mankind. Frank and his wife Barbara attend mass daily at his beloved St. Patrick's Cathedral, and he has, on many occasions, helped the cathedral bridge financial crises. I can think of at least two—when the steeple was struck by lighting and when the sanctuary needed air conditioning. Frank also teaches a weekly inquirer's class and regularly visits prisons to counsel inmates.

His good works are not confined to St. Patrick's. When restoration of the mission in Socorro fell on hard times, it was Frank Gorman who was called on for help. When it was learned that the bond money would fall far short in the building and furnishing of the new Museum of History, Frank again came to the rescue. His good works are legion, but they are accomplished silently—almost secretly. One could go on for the rest of the evening, but Frank probably could not tolerate it.

Frank's father was the founder of Gorman Engineering which sold electrical transformers and switches in the Southwest and in Mexico. At that time the utility companies in Mexico, then foreign owned and managed by English speaking engineers, were impor-

tant customers. Mr. Gorman, Sr. didn't speak Spanish and when the Mexican government expropriated the companies and replaced the English speaking management with Mexican nationals, Gorman Engineering needed help.

At this point, Frank and Barbara and their children moved to Mexico City in 1962. One of the primary reasons for this move was that Frank would become proficient in Spanish. Frank returned often to El Paso, becoming a regular customer of Aero Mexico, which then had a fleet of Douglas DC-6's which were four engine propeller planes. Frank traveled on what was a daily flight from Mexico City to Juárez with stops at Torreón and Chihuahua.

Frank had been a navy pilot during the war, and as such was acutely aware of any "changes" in the sound and performance of an airplane. On one flight, Frank noticed that the minute the plane landed in Torreón, the inward right engine stopped and the plane taxied to the terminal on three engines. As passengers disembarked, two workers approached the stopped engine with a six-foot long 2 x 4 which had a slot in it. They inserted one of the propeller blades into the slot of the 2 x 4 and gave the blade a hard twist thus correcting it's pitch. Frank was a little apprehensive at the take off. However, the procedure was repeated in Chihuahua and probably again in Juárez although Frank didn't wait in Juárez to see the workers with the 2 x 4. The Gormans remained in Mexico City for six months and, if he would talk about it, Frank probably worked for the church in Mexico City.

After returning to El Paso, Frank continued to travel to Mexico almost monthly. On another flight from Mexico City to Juárez the plane attempted to land in Juárez during a severe sandstorm. Unable to complete the landing, the plane returned to Chihuahua, advising passengers that there would be a short delay before completing the flight to Juárez.

Frank, being familiar with El Paso sandstorms, thought that the storm would last at least until nightfall and that the plane would then return to Mexico City, stranding the Juárez bound passengers in Chihuahua until a flight the next day. He contracted with a taxi to drive him to Juárez. The cost was to be forty dollars. Some other passengers heard of his plans and joined him, resulting in a cost of eight dollars each. His call to Aero Mexico the next day confirmed that indeed the plane had never completed its flight to Juárez!

Frank's maternal grandfather was Arthur Knotts who was involved with mining in Mexico and for many years lived in the mountain village of Guanacevi. Frank wanted to visit the place where his grandparents had lived and he took his son Mike with him to Parral. Here he chartered a light plane to fly them to Guanacevi. When the pilot came out to the plane he was carrying a string sack containing two bottles. Frank inquired what was in the sack and was told that it was beer. Frank told the pilot that he couldn't fly with a pilot who would have beer for lunch. The pilot obligingly took one bottle out of the sack.

After scaring the sheep away, they landed on a meadow not far from Guanacevi. Frank offered the pilot $10 if he would not drink the remaining beer at lunch. He then flagged down a truck driver and contracted to be driven to the village and, later in the day, back to the plane. After a successful visit he returned to the plane where the pilot showed him the unopened bottle of beer and collected his ten dollars from Frank.

Frank has survived flying in Mexico and is here tonight for us to pay tribute to all he has done for our community. You might review the list of business and civic accomplishments that is on your table. It is with pleasure I present him for induction into the Society's Hall of Honor.

Nancy Hamilton
recipient of the
Eugene O. Porter Award
Volume 48, 2003

The Eugene O. Porter Award was established in 1975 in memory of the first editor of *Password*. This award is made each year to the author of the article deemed to be the outstanding article published during that year.

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

THE RECIPIENT OF THE PORTER AWARD FOR 2003, Nancy Hamilton, is a native El Pasoan who began writing local history thirty years ago while she was a reporter for the *El Paso Herald Post*.

A graduate of Texas Western College, now the University of Texas at El Paso, she had a career that alternated newspaper reporting with educational public relations. She was with the *El Paso Times* from 1950 to 1959, then spent nine years as the first full-time media relations employee of the El Paso Independent School District. After her marriage to Ralph E. Hamilton in 1968, she stayed at home with his two children for several years before returning to newspaper work with the *El Paso Herald Post* in 1972. Four years later, she moved to U.T. El Paso, working first with the news and information department and then as associate director of Texas Western Press where she edited scholarly books.

During the time that she was at the University, she also edited *Password* for three years—the last of the unpaid editors. She also edited the *El Paso Times* book page for several months, and assisted Dale L. Walker in editing and writing for the University's *Nova* magazine and for the magazine of the Western Writers of America, *Roundup*. Walker and Leon Metz put her name in nomination for the vice-presidency of Western Writers of America against a candidate she was sure would win. The other candidate however did not win and she served two years as vice president, two years as president, and after the death of Francis Fugate, took over his work as secretary-treasurer for almost two years.

As part of the University's 75th anniversary observance, she wrote *UTEP: A Pictorial History,* published in 1989. Following cancer surgery later that year, she retired from the University but continued to edit books for Texas Western Press and other publishers, for a total of approximately seventy titles. The University's Department of Communication asked her to teach a public relations course, and she later taught a Center for Lifelong Learning class on the plays of Tennessee Williams.

One of Mrs. Hamilton's hobbies includes the collecting of *retablos* which are Mexican folk paintings of saints on tin-plated steel or copper sheets. She has also presented symposiums in New Mexico and Arizona and has loaned material to exhibits held throughout the United States and in Poland. For twelve years she edited a newsletter for fellow collectors which had a mailing list of nearly three hundred.

She retired from the University in the early nineties but continued to edit books for Texas Western Press and other publishers—a total of approximately seventy titles. The University's Department of Communication asked her to teach a public relations course, and she later taught a Center for Lifelong Learning class on the plays of Tennessee Williams. She also presented an entertaining and most informative talk on *retablos* for an Elder Hostel group. She had taken many of her *retablos* to demonstrate her talk. The participants of Elder Hostel were from everywhere except El Paso, and they were most appreciative of the knowledge they gained. It was discussed within the group long after the talk was concluded.

Mrs. Hamilton was accredited by the Public Relations Society of America, an honor held by about 5,000 members in the United States, and she had also served twice as president of the Rio Grande Chapter. She administered the accreditation test to local candidates and for several years also served as proctor for the local chapter of American Mensa, Ltd.

Mrs. Hamilton is a past sheriff of Mount Franklin Corral, now merged with the El Paso Corral of Westerners. In 1988 she received the Phillip A. Danielson Award from Westerners International for the best paper presented at a Westerners meeting. For the past three years, she has chaired the University of Texas at El Paso Heritage Commission whose volunteers maintain Heritage House, which preserves the University's history. She has contributed numerous articles and book reviews to *Password* as well as to other southwest publications. Her latest published piece about El Paso history is a chapter in *Legendary Watering Holes: The Saloons that Made Texas Famous* which was released in October by Texas A&M Press. In the *El Paso Times* dated Monday, November 29, 2004, Leon Metz said:

> Nancy's piece in this remarkable book is titled "Ben Dowell's Saloon and the Monte Carlo of the West." And Ben Dowell's Saloon during the 1880's occupied what would now be the ground floor of the Downtown Paso del Norte Hotel.
>
> Everybody who was anybody, from judges and preachers to cowboys, politicians, statesmen, outlaws, businessmen and horse traders, legal and otherwise, sought solace, perhaps through drink or cards or perhaps just finding someone to talk to.

Among the many articles she has written, one laid the groundwork for the article on the Daguerre family, "Alexandre Daguerre, Pioneer Trader at the Pass of the North" which was published in *Password* in 2003 and which has created much interest among our readers. It is for this article that she is receiving the Porter Award.

Monument to the "Seven Brave Men"

The Massacre at Mimbres Springs

By Barbara Dent

The construction on the main branch of the El Paso Public Library and the El Paso Museum of History in our downtown area has begun. These structures will occupy Carnegie Square and Cleveland Square and will bring new interest to the central part of town.[1] Because of these improvements, the old landmarks—the Golden Age Center, Mandy the Mule, and a white pylon monument to the "Seven Brave Men," had to be moved. The monument was given to the city of El Paso as a memorial to Emmett Mills by his brother, General Anson Mills on September 20, 1920. The monument has an interesting history. On July 27, 1861 the *Mesilla Times* published an article, stating that Freeman Thomas, Joseph Roecher, Emmett Mills, John Wilson, John Portell, Robert Aveline, and M. Champion were found dead; killed by Mangas Coloradus and his Apaches at Mimbres Springs. This news was brought into Mesilla by the mail rider from Pinos Altos, New Mexico.

In his book, *Sibley's New Mexico Campaign,* Martin H. Hall describes the area:

> The Mesilla valley of the Rio Grande, which formed the eastern extreme of that part of southern New Mexico called Arizona. . . contained approximately two-thirds of Arizona's population. It was isolated from the more populous upper country—New Mexico proper—by a stretch of desert called the Jornada del Muerto.

In 1860, the town of Mesilla, New Mexico boasted a population of 2,500. The Overland Mail began its route through this thriving community in 1858 and it is here that this interesting story takes place.

Hero's Monument in Carnegie Square behind El Paso Public Library, February 2004.

On the eve of the Civil War, the population of the El Paso area was as divided as that of the rest of the country. There was much dissension between the two camps, the Union sympathizers and the Confederate sympathizers. Mesilla was a hotbed of Confederate interest and activity. Texas seceded from the Union and joined the Confederate States of America. Mesilla voted to become part of the Confederate State of Arizona and its citizens were in turmoil for there was sure to be fighting. The United States army post, Fort Fillmore, located six miles south of Mesilla, had received the complement of solders who had been sent from Fort McLane, sometimes called Fort Webster, when it was abandoned in July of 1861. Shortly thereafter, Colonel John R. Baylor, Confederate States of America, and the Texas Calvary approached Fort Fillmore with its complement of Union soldiers who were among the 800 men from Fort Fillmore who were surrendered to Colonel Baylor by Major Isaac Lynde, United States Army, on July 26, 1861.

The Union troops on the southwestern frontier were all being reassigned to the eastern campaign. This withdrawal of the Union Army left the southwestern settlements unprotected. The Indians took advantage of the absence of the "Yellow Legs" and the tribes went on the warpath.

In the desert landscape of the Southwest, it is hard to visualize a lush oasis area such as Mimbres Springs or Cooke's Springs, as it is sometimes called. Watering holes such as these were rest-stops for Indians, traders, wagon trains, the Overland Mail Stage, and, in later years, the railroads. Mimbres Springs is six miles northwest on the road to Cooke's Peak, and sixteen miles northeast of present-day Deming, New Mexico. The springs are near Cooke's Canyon and are situated in the midst of the deserted adobe ruins of old Fort Cummings and the rock fence of the Overland Stage Coach ranch. Today an old unused wooden building, built years ago by the Southern Pacific Railroad protects the springs.

W.W. Mills, brother of Emmett Mills and Anson Mills, was a prisoner at Fort Bliss, charged with espionage against the Confederate States of America. He had been arrested by James Magoffin as soon as Texas joined the Confederacy. W.W. learned of his brother's death when a copy of the *Mesilla Times* newspaper containing the story of Emmett's death was thrown to W.W. through the window of his cell.

In 1891, much later in his life, he recalled the story in his book *Forty Years at El Paso, 1858-1898.* In this book he relies mostly on memory and on George Frazer's account,[2] written by O.W. Williams, published in the *Southwestern Sentinel,* Silver City, New Mexico, January 31, 1885. This article was reprinted in the *El Paso Times* on January 20, 1887. In his book, Mr. Mills relates that he and his brothers were Union sympathizers and that he was arrested in the early days of the Civil War. While he was a prisoner, he wrote to his brother, Emmett, telling him that there would soon be fighting between the Texans and the Union troops and suggested that he report to the commanding officer at Fort Fillmore. Emmett at that time was employed by the Overland Stage Line at their Tres Hermanos Ranch, just west of Mesilla.[3] Emmett followed his brother's advice, but he received no encouragement at the Fort. He believed that he was in danger from the "rebels" in Mesilla and decided to leave the area. He and six other men fled in a mail coach in an attempt to reach Union forces in California. W.W. wrote "At Cooke's Canyon, about one hundred miles west of Mesilla they were attacked by a large body of Apache Indians under Mangas Coloradas, 'Bloody Sleeves,' and one of the most desperate frontier fights on record ensued."

Under a stone, on the top of the wall, Alexandre Daguerre, a freighter who found and buried the bodies, found a penciled note dated July 23, 1861. The note left the message that they had been fighting for two days and had killed many Indians, that the others were now killed or wounded except for two, that they were out of water and would try to escape that night.

It appears that Emmett Mills and the other men with whom he was traveling had time to gain the top of little hill and build a stone breast-work about two feet high, enclosing a space about twelve feet square. Under a stone, on the top of the wall, Alexandre Daguerre, a freighter who found and buried the bodies, found a penciled note dated July 23, 1861. The note left the message that they had been fighting for two days and had killed many Indians, that the others were now killed or wounded except for two, that they were out of water and would try to escape that night. The Indians who looted the bodies sold their arms and watches in Mexico and claimed that they lost forty warriors in the fight.[4]

Anson Mills wrote a book, also a vanity press publication, in 1921, in which he reflects on the past. He stated that on the eve of the Civil War, he left El Paso and traveled to Washington D.C. to obtain his commission in the U.S. Army. He learned of W.W.'s arrest and Emmett's death from a New Orleans newspaper.

Dr. Rex W. Strickland edited W.W. Mills' book for reprint in 1962. In this publication Dr. Strickland gathered additional information and summarized what happened at Cooke's Springs. He states that on Saturday, July 20, 1861, an Overland Mail Company coach, a "celerity wagon" with seven heavily armed men aboard left Mesilla destined for California and the protection of federal troops.[5] "One mile beyond Cooke's Springs the occupants deserted the coach and took to higher ground." Here they fashioned a crude rock enclosure on top of a peak. On Sunday morning a combined force of Apaches led by Cochise and Mangas Coloradus attacked them. The battle lasted for three days with Mangas departing after the second day, leaving Cochise to finish the job.

The mail rider discovered the bodies of all seven men on July 27th. Probably this news prompted Colonel Baylor to send Captain Frazer and a patrol of fifteen men to bury them where they lay. There is some disagreement as to who buried them. Alexandre Daguerre, who was leading a freight wagon train, is said to have found the bodies and buried them. Quite likely a Charles Brown and James Tevis were with the wagon train, for they claim to have buried the bodies of the seven also.

Over the fortified spot was a cover of cedar boughs, perhaps to shield the wounded from the July sun. Mills, Roescher, Portell, and Aveline were found in the enclosure. Thomas and Champion were found sixty yards away and Wilson was found one hundred-fifty yards outside with a trail of blood covering the path he had crawled before he died. Only two of the bodies were scalped, but all were stripped. There was no note found; this is a very important point since W.W. Mills speaks of a note left behind.[6]

Residents of Janos, Mexico, reported that both Mangas Coloradus and Cochise had taken part in the battle and had lost over forty braves. Watches and other properties of these seven men were discovered in Janos, where the victors had gone to sell their spoils and tell their tale.

This story has been used as the basis of a number of novels, among them *Seven Brave Men,* by Brian Garfield; *The Seven Men at Mimbres Springs,* by Will Henry. Both of these authors combined the known facts and the old myths concerning the massacre. Then they "invented" the remainder of their stories in a plausible fashion to provide entertainment for the reader. The substantive information and the only account contemporary with the event is the article on the massacre in the *Mesilla Times* on July 27, 1861. The rest of the stories seem to be taken from W.W. Mills, however neither author gives him credit.

Hero's Monument: detail

There was, standing alone in the square, behind the El Paso Public Library, a Hero's Monument, the only visible memorial to "Emmett Mills and the six other brave men." This monument bearing the story of "Mimbres Springs was presented to the City of El Paso by General A. Mills on September 20, 1920 in a simple, but solemn ceremony."[7]

On May 19, 2004, the Hero's Monument was relocated to Aztec Calendar—old City Hall Park. It is actually located in a grassy area on North Stanton Street adjacent to the Kayser Building. Will DeBusk polished the letters on the plaques so that they can now be read. Overall it seems to be a splendid setting. Also, according to Gary Williams of the El Paso Community Foundation, the plaque depicting the Union men faces north while the Confederate men face south. This is how Anson Mills had done it in 1920. The story of these seven men and how they fought and died has been told for over a century and has become a frontier myth in the folklore of the Southwest.

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FOOTNOTES

1. The city block bounded by the streets of El Paso, Missouri, Santa Fe, and Franklin is officially known as "Cleveland Square." The city block bounded by the streets of Oregon, Missouri, El Paso, and Franklin is officially known as "Carnegie Square." The El Paso Public Library, main branch, is located in Carnegie Square. The history of these squares, according to Leon Metz in his books *El Paso Guided Through Time* and *El Paso Chronicles,* is an interesting tale. "Around 1850," Metz tells us, "Simeon Hart donated what we now call Carnegie and Cleveland Squares to the U.S. Government." The Government then dedicated the area as a Cemeteries Reserve and it became the burying place for the Fort Bliss soldiers. Later in 1883 the Army transferred the remains of the military to Minnesota. County Judge Julius A. Buckner claimed title to the land and it became known as Buckner Square. The federal government sued Buckner over the title. The decision favored the United States. During Pres. Grover Cleveland's administration the government then donated the ground to the city of El Paso in 1893. Andrew Carnegie provided funds to erect a new building for the El Paso Public Library, which was named for him, the Carnegie Library. It was located on a portion of this site, then called Buckner Square and opened April 25, 1904.

   The name of the area surrounding the library was officially named Carnegie Square. In February 1906 the El Paso City Council voted to name the block west of the library, across El Paso Street, Cleveland Square in honor of President Grover Cleveland. Both blocks have been generally referred to as Cleveland Square.

2. Capt. George M. Frazer, Arizona Rangers, CSA.
3. In 1861, the Overland Mail Co. was owned by George H. Giddings.
4. Mills, W.W., *Forty Years at El Paso, 1858-1898.* Privately printed. 51.
5. A "celerity wagon" is similar in size to a Concord Coach, but lighter in weight.
6. Strickland, reprint of *Forty Years at El Paso,* Reprint. 195.
7. *El Paso Herald Post,* Sept. 20, 1920.

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Tigua Indians and El Paso at the Texas State Centennial Exposition, Part I

By Nicholas P. Houser

The 1936 Texas Centennial Exposition was the biggest statewide celebration in Texas history. El Paso and the Tigua Indian were well represented at the exposition, which helps make El Pasoans, Texans, and Americans aware of the region's multicultural heritage. The Tigua Indians of Ysleta del Sur Pueblo participated in the Texas State Fairs of 1890, 1899, and 1936. This participation initiated public awareness of the Tigua within the region and the state. Tribal involvement was related to activities that promoted the El Paso area and publicized the region's cultural heritage, agricultural wealth, and economic resources.

State Fairs of 1890 and 1899

The *Herald-Post* described Tigua preparations for the 1890 fair thus:

> There are about 50 Pueblo Indians being trained at Ysleta, who will take to the State Fair at Dallas in October, by H.G. Bosong. The men are being drilled in all sorts of Indian sports and boys are getting to be experts in the art of bow and arrows. They will be dressed in Indian fashion and it is expected will attract much attention at the fair. The American boys of Ysleta, are learning the use of the bow and arrow and can now kill rabbits, birds, etc., as trophies of their skills.[1]

It is known that Cacique Manuel Ortega traveled by train with several tribal members to the Dallas State Fair, other than that simple fact, little is known about Tigua participation in the early fairs because of the limited historical record.

In 1899, the tribe again participated in the state fair. An account of that activity reflects the cultural insensitivity of the period: "A car load [train] of Indians and squaws left Monday to be exhibited at the Dallas Fair. They were dressed with the usual costumes and attracted a great deal of attention."[2] The statement suggests that the tribal delegation was exhibited as an object of curiosity rather than as participants in a cultural activity.

Preparing for the Texas Centennial

The 1936 Texas Centennial observance was the first time that El Paso and Texas acknowledged the tribe's contributions to the development of the region and state. In the past, Tigua participation at public events was considered entertaining and exotic, but of little importance to the greater community.[3] Many Texans of Native American, African-American and Hispanic ancestry considered the 1936 Centennial Exposition in Dallas as an important milestone in Texas history because it acknowledged and celebrated the state's multicultural heritage.[4]

Interest in the 1936 Texas Centennial began in the 1920's, although most of the planning was achieved from 1933 to 1934. Dallas was selected over San Antonio and Houston to host the exposition. The Centennial Exposition was many things—a state fair, a world's fair, and a centennial exposition. The Texas constitution was amended to permit the allocation of monies for a large-scale exposition. In 1935, the state legislature and the federal government contributed $3,000,000 each to the celebration.[5] The Commission of Control for the Texas Centennial encouraged secondary celebratory activities across the state. The exposition was put together in only fourteen months at the cost of twenty-five million dollars.

The Commission wanted to launch an extensive building program to attract tourists, to improve roads, and to build impressive monuments and museums.[6] The organization received funding from the Texas Legislature to provide limited financial support to local organizations within the state and Texas cities were encour-

aged to submit proposals for state funding of the centennial by September 1, 1934.

El Pasoans complained that centennial funding was prejudicial. In October 1935, the Chamber of Commerce charged that the commission offered El Paso only a thousand dollars for the erection of a Texas Ranger monument.[7] Wallace Perry, El Paso state Centennial Commission representative, objected that the advisory board of the Texas Historians discriminated against west Texans. El Paso Mayor R.E. Sherman accompanied a city delegation to Austin to request that the commission approve the city's application for $150,000. Shortly thereafter, the town was awarded $50,000 to be spent by the local committee without bureaucratic restrictions.[8]

El Paso Plans Centennial Activities

El Paso's centennial planning was challenged by the Great Depression. Municipal, county, and state budgets were severely limited but federal relief monies funded some centennial programs. Wherever possible, the private sector was asked to support centennial activities.[9]

State funding guidelines restricted funding to permanent projects such as buildings, statues, and markers, but not for pageantry. With the $50,000 El Paso received from the state for local centennial projects, the town proposed to construct a welcome house to serve tourists.[10] It was to be designed in the mission architectural style. Another project was to construct an exposition building at Washington Park.

State funding guidelines restricted funding to permanent projects such as buildings, statues, and markers, but not for pageantry. With the $50,000 El Paso received from the state for local centennial projects, the town proposed to construct a welcome house to serve tourists.[10] It was to be designed in the mission architectural style.

The Chamber of Commerce centennial committee was granted authority to select a permanent project for the El Paso area. The committee agreed to build a Memorial Arts Building at one of four recommended locations: (1) downtown El Paso, (2) the old Magoffin Homestead, (3) the city library, or (4) the College of Mines. The downtown merchants petitioned to place the museum within

the town's central business district. Others campaigned to purchase the old Magoffin Home and adjoining property. One faction favored adding a wing to the public library to accommodate a museum. Some advocated to place the museum on city property adjacent to the College of Mines. The mayor and county judge cautioned that the town and county lacked funds to maintain and operate a museum.[11]

The controversy was so intense that the chamber had to disband its quarrelling committee. On December 19, 1935, the issue was settled when the county advisory board voted 6-5 to locate the museum on ten acres adjacent to the College of Mines (University of Texas at El Paso). In response, an *El Paso Times* editorial asserted that it was time to put bad feelings aside:

> Now let the irritation die out, the rancor be forgotten. And especially let no one hold resentment against the College of Mines. The college itself had nothing to do with this squabble, was a silent bystander throughout, and should not be unjustly penalized by the withdrawal of one iota of public favor or support.[12]

In addition, the state funded the construction of the Socorro Mission diorama that was exhibited at the Dallas exposition. El Paso's three performing groups at the exposition were funded by private contributions. They included the Tigua Indian dancers, the Tipica Orchestra, and the Texas Chorus. The city of El Paso intended to subsidize participation of the orchestra and chorus with an allocation of $500, but it was determined, when they were about to depart for Dallas, that the funding ordinance violated the city charter. On June 9, 1936, the chamber of commerce hastily sent one thousand solicitation letters requesting donations of one dollar each to support El Paso's participation at the Texas Centennial Exposition.

The El Paso Public Schools coordinated and sponsored the largest school centennial program in Texas. It was to be a five-day historical pageant that dramatized regional history. It involved more than 30,000 school children.

On New Years Day, January 1, 1936, El Paso's Sun Carnival parade launched the state's centennial celebrations. At the time, it was the biggest local event ever held and attracted over 100,000 observers. The parade, in which a large group of Tigua Indians marched, reflected the region's ethnic groups—Asians, Anglos, His-

panics, Black Americans, and Native Americans. The Mescalero Apache tribe's float was entitled "First American." The parade was followed by the Sun Bowl game that involved New Mexico's Aggies against Hardin-Simmons.

Tigua Indians Travel to the Dallas Exposition

On June 10, 1936, thirty-four Tigua Indians traveled by bus to Dallas to celebrate the centennial. Cleoflas Calleros, local historian and social worker, organized the participation of the Tigua Indians at the exposition. The Ford Motor Company may have provided transportation from El Paso to Dallas.[14] A new Ford bus transported the tribal delegation to the exposition. The side panels of the bus were decorated with a portrait of an Indian in headdress and the large letters: "Tigua Indians Ysleta, Texas," The El Paso caravan included the Tigua Indians and the Negro Chorus. They stopped en route in Abilene, San Antonio and small towns to promote El Paso's centennial. They distributed centennial ribbons

Tiguas ready to depart for Austin (photo courtesy of N. Houser)

and other El Paso promotional materials. Cleofas Calleros described the trip:

> The Ysleta Indians, 34 in number and in my charge, accompanied by Assistants Angel H. Valenzuela, Jr., and Eduardo Ordonez, left Ysleta at 3 p.m. June 10. The El Paso Pioneer Negro Chorus, in charge of Mr. Leslie Reed, left El Paso at 2 p.m. June 10. Both groups traveled together in a new V-8 Ford bus and two private cars. We reached Dallas at 7 p.m. June 11.[15]

The Texas Centennial Exposition opened in Dallas on Saturday, June 6, 1936 and closed on Sunday, November 29th. The Tigua tribal delegation participated in a three-day program, June 12th to 14th, at the exposition. The Texas Centennial celebrated El Paso Day on June 12th. Jack Chaney and Dorrance Roderick served respectively as the general chairman and program chairman for that event.

At 9:30 a.m., the Negro Chorus and the Tigua Indians entered the arena grounds.[17] The centennial coordinators were unaware that they were on the agenda. It was mistakenly announced that the Alabama Indians were to make a special presentation to the president. The Tigua were probably misidentified as Alabama-Coushatta Indians from east Texas.

On June 12, when the Texas Centennial Exposition celebrated El Paso Day, it was also called "The Presidents Day." President Franklin D. Roosevelt delivered a thirty-minute speech at the Cotton Bowl Stadium. Apparently El Paso officials had poorly coordinated the community's presence at this event. The city council had approved the purchase of a $60 dollar Mexican sombrero to be presented to President Roosevelt, but the presentation was not made.[16] Although the group was well stocked with promotional materials, only a few El Paso centennial promotional badges and ribbons were distributed at the exposition.

Most visiting El Pasoans, including members of the Tipica Orchestra and the Texas Chorus, were unaware of the Tigua presentation to President Roosevelt at the Cotton Bowl and therefore were not present at the event. At 9:30 a.m., the Negro Chorus and the Tigua Indians entered the arena grounds.[17] The centen-

nial coordinators were unaware that they were on the agenda. It was mistakenly announced that the Alabama Indians were to make a special presentation to the president. The Tigua were probably misidentified as Alabama-Coushatta Indians from east Texas. Cleofas Calleros recalled that the Tiguas and the Negro Chorus were the only civilians on the arena grounds where hundreds of secret service men, marshals, rangers, soldiers, and marines mingled:

> A few minutes prior to the President's arrival, Mayor Sherman and his wife came in, and I asked the mayor that he and wife join our group after the President's address for the presentation of the Indian program, which they did. At the request of Cacique Damasio Colmenero, I was given the honor of presenting the President with the headdress and naming him Honorary Cacique of the Tigua Indians of Ysleta. The cacique presented the President with a pair of moccasins; squaw Isabel Granillo presented Mr. Roosevelt with an Indian molcajete. Governor Allred presented us to the President and Mrs. Roosevelt. A few minutes prior, the radio announcer announced that Indians from Alabama were to honor the President. This was a mistake of the announcer and could not be corrected in time. Sixty-five thousand spectators looked on.[18]

It was an exceptionally hot day at the Cotton Bowl and several hundred children in the "world's largest choir" suffered from heat stroke.[19] Later that day, the El Paso delegations, comprised of the Tigua Dancers, the Texas Chorus, the Negro Chorus, and the Tipica Orchestra performed at the amphitheater. Mayor Sherman, Mr. Harwell, and Mr. Calleros addressed the audience about El Paso's rich history.

On June 14, the Tigua dancers opened the National Folk Festival, an event that celebrated the state's cultural diversity.[20] The evening program included a performance at the Gulf Petroleum Building with the Tigua and the Tipica Orchestra that was broadcast nationally on the radio.[21]

In 1935, many articles appeared in the media promoting El Paso's contributions to the Texas Centennial. Every Sunday from February to April, KTSM radio station aired a dramatic series entitled "The Builders of El Paso." Radio actors portrayed major

historical figures—Cabeza de Vaca, Simeon Hart, James Wiley Magoffin, Solomon Schutz and others. The characters reflected the area's multicultural heritage. This material is now in Special Collections at the University of Texas at El Paso. A local publisher produced a regional travel guide in an attractive magazine format that celebrated the state centennial.[22]

In the summer of 1935, the *El Paso Herald-Post* had proclaimed that El Paso's missions had been neglected. The members of the Chamber of Commerce were convinced that the historic missions, if properly promoted, would benefit tourism as had been realized in California by popularizing the Pacific coast missions. The El Paso missions were vigorously promoted, but money was lacking for essential investment to restore historic edifices and for major enhancements to the tourism infrastructure. This centennial effort established a foundation for future mission promotion and restoration projects.

On August 24, 1935, an editorial entitled "Capitalizing on Missions" suggested that El Paso's centenary should highlight the missions:

> . . . the ancient missions at Ysleta, Socorro, San Elizario; the town of Ysleta, recognizably the oldest European settlement in Texas: the oldest farm in continuous cultivation in the United States. . . . . capitalizing on our missions ought to be one of the principal phases of El Paso's Centennial participation has met with quick response and approval from both church and centennial circles.[23]

Wallace Perry, El Paso's centennial commission representative, was a strong advocate of the area missions. In 1935, he had attempted to acquire funding to promote the missions: "...it seems to me that, either with Centennial funds if we can get a large enough allocation or with part Centennial funds and part federal work relief, we ought to be able to dress up both missions and grounds for the Centennial-year visitors."[24]

A small-scale replica of the Socorro Mission was exhibited at the fair.[25] It was reported that relics from the Ysleta and Socorro missions would be displayed at the fair, including what was purported to be an ancient ivory crucifix from the Socorro Mission.

Father Gerard Decorme, historian and resident priest at Ysleta Mission, was commissioned by Bishop A.J. Schuler to write

a history of the lower valley mission. His studies contributed to the history of the Tigua and the neighboring tribes of the region. During the next three decades, the interest created by the centennial would generate research and publications.

NICHOLAS P. HOUSER has advanced degrees in anthropology, history, and public health. As archivist for Ysleta del Sur Pueblo, he conducts research on the Ysleta Grant and the history of the El Paso region. He has created exhibits for museums and cultural centers, including the Tigua Indian Cultural Center, El Paso Mission Trail Association and the Los Portales Visitors Center in San Elizario, etc. He has worked with Native American communities in the American Southwest and Latin America. He has published books and articles and prepared script for video documentaries. He is project historian and co-fundraiser for the XII Travelers Memorial of the Southwest and also a volunteer to several Native American communities in northern Mexico. Mr. Houser resides in El Paso with his wife Norma, and two children, Maria and Perry.

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6. Ragsdale, 75.
7. *El Paso Times,* Oct. 12, 1935.
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9. *El Paso Herald-Post,* Jan. 1, 1935. *El Paso Herald-Post,* May 27, 1936.
10. *El Paso Times,* Oct. 20, 1935.
11. *El Paso Times,* Dec. 10, 1935.
12. *El Paso Times,* Dec. 19, 1935.

13. *El Paso Herald-Post,* Jan. 25, 1936; *El Paso Times,* May 30, 1936; *Texas Centennial Review,* March 18, April 22, 1936.

14. Henry Ford made a personal tour of Texas to celebrate the centennial that included black gospel singers and other entertainers (Texas State Library and Archives, Texas Centennial Records; University of Texas, Arlington, Special Collections Division).

15. *El Paso Times,* June 24, 1936.

16. *El Paso Times,* June 24, 1936.

17. El Paso Day was celebrated the day before the tribe's annual feast day of San Antonio, which was observed in Ysleta minus the tribal drum, cacique and thirty-four tribal members. The first activity of the day was President Roosevelt's Cotton Bowl speech.

18. *El Paso Times,* June 24, 1936.

19. Ragsdale 1987.

20. The Tigua performed traditional dances such as "El Primer Bail," "Los Joguenes," "La Figura," and "El Sharo," The local newspaper reported that the tribe retained their ancient government. One article described their dress as follows: "The men dancers wear red uniforms with yellow trimmings and the women wear black and white costumes with multi-colored ribbons" (*El Paso Herald-Post,* June 10, 1936).

21. *El Paso Times,* June 24, 1936.

22. Beedle, C.L.; C.L. Trigg; A.B. Purceli; Ferne D. Hedgecork, editors. *Picturesque Southwest, Traveler's Guide to Southwestern Attractions,* Circulation Offices, El Paso, Texas. 1937. [research note: This is the first comprehensive travel publication that focused on the El Paso area.]

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24. *El Paso Herald-Post,* August 21, 1935.

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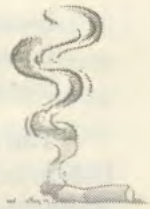
The El Paso Jail Fire



By Gerald G. Raun

On Monday evening, March 6, 1916, the residents of El Paso were shocked by the headline that greeted them on the first page of the *El Paso Herald.*

City Jail Aflame: 25 Men Are Burned.

Gasoline Blaze the Cause

horrible accident, they learned, had claimed the lives of twenty-five prisoners at the city jail—a minor embellishment of the actual number. There were actually sixteen dead and nineteen others severely burned at that time. Many of the dead and injured were locked in their cells. An additional fifty inmates including some women who were in a different part of the jail escaped uninjured.[1] The final death toll, however, would be twenty-seven, all of whom were men.

A fire had broken out in the jail as prisoners were passing through a delousing station. This process was under the supervision of police surgeon Dr. G.B. Calnan and, according to the newspapers, it was the first time that this particular process had been utilized. The procedure was to give the prisoners a bath in a mixture of kerosene, formaldehyde, and vinegar. At the same time their clothing was being soaked in a vat containing gasoline, creosote, and formaldehyde:

> The fire was started when H. M. Cross, known to the police as a 'hop head,' struck a match to light a cigaret [sic] at the end of the jail furtherest [sic.] from the vats of gasoline in which the prisoners were being bathed for the purpose of killing vermin. Naked prisoners, from whose bodies the fumes of gasoline were arising, surrounded him [sic] in the various cells and the air was so

> heavily impregnated with the explosive vapor that the flash of the match set the whole jail on fire in a blast instantly.[2]

The original fatalities were listed on March 7th, as: Pasqual Calderon; El Paso; Ysabel Rodrigues, Juárez; Luis Alcaron, Michoacan; H. M. Cross, Davenport, Ohio; Domicio Molina, age 17, El Paso; Gregorio Ornelas, El Paso; Ernesto Garcia, half Japanese and half Mexican, Juárez; Louis Santabanez, El Paso; Jose Hernandez, El Paso; Alan R. Odum, Stanton, Texas; Ocario Soto, El Paso; Juan Provencio, El Paso; four additional unidentified dead were believed to be D. Anevas, L. Avilar, F. Santana, and E. Bustillos.

Alan Odum, who was nineteen years old, died in the Hotel Dieu Hospital soon after the fire. Before he died he dictated a note to his mother which was written and dispatched by one of the sisters at the hospital:

> My Dear Mother: I was travelling through here to Arizona with a man on an immigrant car, who promised to pay me when we arrived. I got off to get something to eat, and the officer caught me for deserting the army. They were cleaning with gasoline, and it caught fire. I've tried to live a good life since I saw you, and I think I have succeeded fairly well. Tell my brother and sister goodbye.[3]

The man who was believed to have started the holocaust, H. M. Cross, had been arrested only about an hour before the explosion. He and Edward McGowan were accused of shoplifting a baseball glove from Krakauer, Zork & Moye Hardware. McGowan was only slightly injured in the blast.

R. H. Bagby, a trustee who was in charge of the prisoners, said that he saw McGowan light a match and was moving toward him to extinguish it but McGowan put it out before Bagby could reach him. Cross then attempted to light a cigarette in spite of warnings from Dr. Calnan and jailor Frank Scotten.

Ironically, El Paso was playing host to what the *El Paso Herald* called the "City's Greatest Religious Convention" which had opened on Sunday, March 5th. During the meeting on March 7th, Fred B. Fisher, speaking at the Laymen's Movement convention said, "We have passed the day when we can longer [sic.] look upon prisoners as prisoners but we must regard them as men. He then asked for prayers for the dead, the injured, and their families."[4]

While the March 7th edition of the rival newspaper, the *El Paso Morning Times,* is missing from microfilm records in both the El Paso Public Library and the Sul Ross State University Library in Alpine, the March 8th edition headlined the fact that an investigation of the fire had been ordered and that a grand jury would be convened. Preliminary testimony before an inquest held by Justice J. M. Deaver revealed some disagreement about whether or not the prisoners had been searched for matches or warned not to use them. Grand jury representatives A. H. Anderson, R. E. Hinds, A. G. Ridleman, Paul Boland, and C. H. Findlay were present at the inquest and questioned witnesses after they had been interrogated by Assistant County Attorney Frank Feuille, Jr., and Justice Deaver.

Thirty-fourth District Judge Dan M. Jackson instructed the grand jury to determine if the fire had been a result of negligence and, if so, bring the necessary charges. The inquest had produced some conflict about whether or not the prisoners had been searched for matches as well as the whereabouts of the keys necessary to release prisoners from their cells as well as to unlock outside doors.

Much testimony was taken as to the location of keys of the cells in the upper tier which, according to Dr. Calnan, held six men. It is not clear from the accounts of either of the El Paso newspapers whether the initial fatalities were all among the men who were being bathed or whether the prisoners in the upper tier were among them. Melodramatic accounts of events during and following the fire indicate that the fire had its greatest effect on those in the second tier. It should be noted that apparently none of the trustees, jailers, physicians, or police in attendance suffered any injuries. It was reported that R. H. Bagby, the chief trustee, managed to save himself by turning on the shower bath and standing under it. All of the other officials may have been far enough away from the initial ignition to escape since several doors and windows were reportedly open.[5]

The *El Paso Herald,* which typically was much more melodramatic in its reporting than the *El Paso Morning Times,* ran graphic descriptions of the debacle including, "unusual escapes," "heat of body damages pavement," "blood drips from feet. . . . runs several blocks blazing." Perhaps the most interesting, and probably the most unbelievable, of these accounts is that Daniel Yrias, a prisoner with a wooden leg managed to save himself by standing

on the wooden leg while hanging on to the bars of his cell. "He sustained severe burns about the head and the hand which held to the cell iron, but would have been more seriously injured if he had not drawn himself up on the wooden stump of a leg."[6]

There was also contradictory testimony as to whether or not the prisoners had been searched for matches. One slightly injured prisoner, A. B. Perry, alias T. L. Deal, said "They never did warn us not to smoke. I had smoked a cigarette about forty-five minutes before and we received no warning. Neither did they tell us what we were bathing in. I had no idea what it was." Two of the trustees, R. H. Bagley and Harry Morris, swore at the inquest that the prisoners had been warned not to smoke in the jail. Bagley testified, "I had repeatedly warned the men not to make any cigaretes [sic] or strike any matches, telling them if they did there would likely be an explosion."[7]

City jailor, Frank Scotten, who testified at the inquest, was asked by the assistant county attorney:

> Q. What precautions were taken as to matches?
> A. We had the men searched and we asked and begged of them to give up their matches. In most cases we put our hands in the men's pockets to find matches.
> Q. Did you search every one?
> A. There might have been some who were not searched. But we cautioned them repeatedly about striking matches.

Scotten also testified that he did not see a match struck.[8]

In the immediate aftermath of the disaster Alderman J. P. O'Connor, chairman of the sanitary committee of the city council, defended the police department. O'Conner stated that, while some persons were pointing the finger at the police department, it would be wrong to blame the police because they had nothing to do with the delousing.

> It was done by the health department, of which I am chairman. It was being done by, and under the direction of medical men who are men of intelligence. While I had nothing to do with the work personally, I do not wish any censure, if there is to be any, to be placed on any other department.[9]

The following day El Paso Mayor Tom Lea, who had been in Albuquerque, issued a statement deeply deploring the accident,

and objected to the statements of "irresponsible people" who would place blame upon the officials in charge.[10]

On March 9th the *El Paso Herald* reported three more fatalities among the badly injured. This had been predicted by the *El Paso Morning Times* on the previous day. The first to succumb to his injuries was T. D. "Tommy" James, age sixty-four. The *El Paso Herald* said that James ". . . . had come to Texas forty-one years before after being graduated from Trinity and Ohio Medical colleges." Apparently he did not practice medicine in El Paso because the paper only remarked upon his career as a member of the Primrose Minstrels and as ". . . one of the most famous comedians on the circuit . . . ." His wife had died about two years earlier. The *El Paso Herald* also reported, that James, who had been arrested a number of times, ". . . was always released by judge (sic.) Thomas on the payment of a small fine, or because of his advanced age." It was not until the 11th when the *El Paso Morning Times* reported the three fatalities and in its more subdued manner simply gave the names in a short paragraph. The eighteenth victim was A. C. Wanroy who was a native of Holland, Michigan where his father resided. Wanroy was being held on a twenty- five day sentence for vagrancy. Victim number nineteen was Daniel Yslas who was also being held on a vagrancy charge, having been arrested on Sunday. Like James, Wanroy, and Yslas, most of the burned were being held on relatively minor charges.

The grand jury which was charged with investigating the fire had begun its deliberations, and the *El Paso Herald,* on March 9th, predicted that indictments might be issued. The *El Paso Morning Times* stated that the grand jury had been in session from 9 o'clock until noon and another session was to be held on Friday, March 10th. That morning the *El Paso Herald* reported that two more of the injured had died: Fred Marron, a negro tailor and Luis Galvadon, a laborer. Both men had been charged with vagrancy. Jack Monroe, also arrested for vagrancy, died at 5:50 Friday evening bringing the death toll to twenty-two. On March 25th the *Morning News* reported that the final death toll was twenty-seven and that the grand jury had adjourned after having issued seventy-six true bills, none of which were in regard to the jail fire. That issue was closed and no responsibility was assigned to anyone other than the lighting of a match by a prisoner.

The story of the El Paso jail fire should have ended on this note but in a bizarre turn of events it resurfaced. During the early morning hours of March 9th, three days after the fire, General Francisco "Pancho" Villa attacked the village of Columbus, New Mexico. On March 21st the *El Paso Morning Times* ran this headline:

Mexicans Connect Jail Horror with Columbus Outrage

According to the newspaper, a Miss Susannea Houghton arrived in El Paso on the 12:20 train from Chihuahua City. She was quoted as saying, "The lower classes of Mexicans report that Villa raided Columbus because of his belief that the El Paso jail horror was deliberately planned and executed by Americans." This rather unreliable story should also have been the end of it. Unfortunately, Professor Friedrich Katz, in his recent biography of Villa, opened this issue again.

Katz wrote that prior to the raid Villa had made an impassioned speech to his soldiers during which he mentioned a horrendous incident that had taken place only two days before in El Paso. In what seems to have been standard practice, twenty Mexicans, who had been arrested by local authorities for different reasons, had been soaked with kerosene. It has never been proven whether this was by accident or by intention, but the twenty Mexicans were burned alive. Villa and his men had much reason to suspect that this was a deliberate act, for large numbers of Mexicans had been lynched in the lower Rio Grande valley in the preceding weeks.[11]

Katz cited an article written by a journalist, Tom Mahoney, in which the following appears:

> On the night of March 8, Villa made what his followers describe as the most impassioned speech of his melodramatic life. He began by reciting a long list of grievances of Mexicans against the United States. He described the accidental burning to death of a dozen Mexicans in an El Paso delousing station as murder, and implored revenge.[12]

In a recent critical review of published theories regarding the reasons for Villa's attack upon citizens and property of the United States, Mahoney's article has been shown to have been a largely fictional account which is riddled with inaccuracies.[13]

Mahoney claimed that Villa had machine guns at Columbus and that Pablo López was killed during the attack. Both claims are obviously false. But the most damning statement that Mahoney makes is:

> While his more active fellows were looting the town, an aged Villista sat on top of the hill playing his fiddle in the manner of the Emperor Nero. As they cowered in their home, the Evans family distinctly heard the strains of *La Cucaracha* above the din of battle.[14]

Was the speech ever made? It is highly unlikely. The United States Army Intelligence attached to Pershing's Punitive Expedition, which entered Mexico in pursuit of the "bandits," compiled an extensive report based upon testimony of Villista officers and soldiers who were captured at Columbus and during the expedition. This document traces the day-by-day movements of Villa from November, 1915 until July, 1916 including the raid. A careful reading of this document indicates that, at the time of the fire, Villa was already moving to attack Columbus after having aborted an attack upon his primary target, which was Presidio, Texas or some other Texas town in the vicinity of Ojinaga.[15]

As Villa moved toward his attack upon Presidio, he had informed his troops of the destination. Prior to the attack a number of his officers and men deserted. Villa called off the attack because he feared that the deserters may have revealed his plans. He was attempting to conceal his movements, travelling mostly after dark, as he moved toward Columbus. It is highly unlikely that he could have gotten word of the fire, nor would he have cared if he did. There probably was no speech because most of his troops were conscripts under force and if he had revealed his intentions there would likely have been mass desertions.

One recent writer, apparently accepting Katz's comment about the speech believed that the Villistas at Columbus were well aware that they were going to attack United States citizens and property. "If Katz is correct, the Villistas knew **where** they were, where they were **going,** and **why** they were going there."[16] However, there is strong evidence that Villa did not reveal his intention to attack Columbus. The Villistas captured at Columbus testified to a man that they did not know where they were and similar testimony was given to United States Army interrogators by prisoners captured during the Punitive Expedition.[17]

In an end note Katz largely debunks the idea of the speech saying, "If Villa did indeed mention the burning alive of Mexican Americans in an El Paso jail it would be one of the few times, if not then only time, that he expressed any interest in the plight of Mexican Americans."[18] It is quite clear that neither Katz nor Mahoney consulted the El Paso newspapers about the fire because both of them have the number of fatalities wrong and overlook the fact that not all of those who died were Mexicans. There are no reliable references to the connection between the jail fire other than the questionable account of Miss Houghton and the obviously fictitious story by Mahoney.

The allegation that the jail fire was responsible for Villa's decision to attack Columbus reappeared again during a trial in which Henry Ford was suing a newspaper for libel.

Norman Walker, Associated Press correspondent and chief of the bureau at El Paso, took the stand during the week and told a thrilling story of his capture by Mexican Federal forces. He described conditions along the border in much detail and said responsibility for the Columbus raid had been attributed to the burning of the El Paso jail in which Mexicans were held prisoner.[19]

There have been a number of theories proposed to explain the reasons for this apparently quixotic attack upon United States citizens and property. These have been recently reviewed critically. While the reasons behind Villa's actions may remain obscure it is almost certain that the El Paso jail fire had nothing to do with the Columbus raid.[20]

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ENDNOTES

1. *El Paso Herald,* March 6, 1916, p. 1 (hereafter *EPH*)
2. *EPH,* March 7, p. 1
3. *El Paso Morning Times,* March 8, p. 1 (herafter *EPMT*)
4. *EPH,* March 8, p 1
5. *EPH,* March, 7, p. 1
6. *EPH,* March 7, p. 1
7. *EPH,* March 7, p. 3
8. *EPH,* March 7, p. 3
9. *EPH,* March 7, p. 2, *EPMT,* March 8, p. 2
10. *EPMT,* March 8, p. 2
11. Freidrich Katz, *The Life and Times of Pancho Villa.* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998). 564
12. Tom Mahoney, "The Columbus Raid," *Southwest Review* 17 (1932):164
13. Gerald G. Raun, "Pancho Villa, The Columbus Raid, and the El Paso Jail Fire: A Critical Review." *Journal of Big Bend Studies* 15 (2003):163 -180.
14. Mahoney, op. cit. 169
15. *Report of Operations of "General" Francisco Villa since November 1915.* Adj. Gen. Office 52384662 and 52377635. Record Group 94, National Archives, Washington, D.C. (Herafter RO); Raun, op. cit: 165-166; Katz, op. cit: 563.
16. James W. Hurst, *The Villista Prisoners of 1916-1917.* (Las Cruces, N.M.: Yucca Tree Press, 2000), 87-88.
17. R.O.; Katz, op. cit.: 562, 886; Hurst, op. cit.: 20, 87-88; Raun, op. cit.: 172
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19. *Marfa New Era,* June 21, 1919
20. See Raun, op. cit., 2003; E. Bruce White, "The Muddied Waters of Columbus, New Mexico," *The Americas* 32 (19750:72-98; Friedrich Katz, "Alemania y Francisco Villa," *Historia Mexicana* 12 (1962):83-103; Katz, "Pancho Villa and the Attack on Columbus, New Mexico." *American Historical Review* 83 (1978):101-130; Michael C. Meyer, "Felix Sommerfeld and the Columbus Raid of 1916." *Arizona and the West* 25 (1983):213-228; James A. Sandos, "German Involvement in Northern Mexico, 1915-1916. A New Look at the Columbus Raid." *Hispanic American Historical Review* 50 (1970):73; Larry Harris, *Pancho Villa and the Columbus Raid,* (El Paso: McMath Co., 1951); Haldeen Braddy, *Pancho Villa at Columbus: The Raid of 1916.* Southwestern Studies Monograph No. 9. (El Paso: Texas Western College Press). Raun, op. cit.

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