Password

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PASSWORD requests writers to send a query letter and self-addressed stamped envelope before submitting manuscripts. Manuscripts should be double-spaced on 8½x11 paper, one side only, with ample margins. Ideal maximum length is 20 pages including documentation. Shorter articles are welcome. For style and form, consult recent issues of the Quarterly. Please attach a brief biographical sketch. Photographs and illustrations should be accompanied by identifying captions. All articles or book reviews published become the property of the Quarterly.

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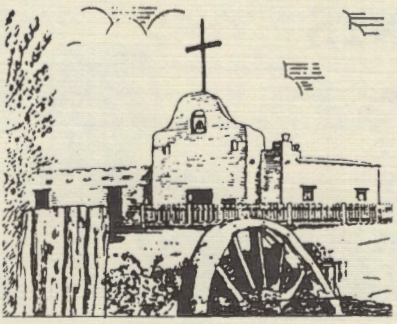

The logo of the Fort Bliss Officers' Club serves as this issue's "title-page insignia." It appears here with the permission of David Moore, business manager, Fort Bliss Officers' Club.

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A Stranger in an Alien Land

The Letters of Henry L. Dexter, 1854-1869

by Art Leibson

INTRODUCTION to PART II

The reader is reminded that this two-part essay is based on my copies of some thirty letters written from the El Paso region by Henry L. Dexter to his sister, Mary Dexter Roundy, living in Illinois, where Dexter had grown up. The original letters, lent to me about forty-five years ago by El Pasoan Charles J. Mapel, a distant relative of Dexter's, disappeared after Mapel's death – except for one, which Mapel had allowed me to keep. That letter had been penned on the back of a one-page Mesilla *Times* EXTRA dated July 29, 1861.

Part I, titled "This Heaven Forsaken Country," appeared in the Summer 1993 *Password.* It described Dexter as a moody, misanthropic fugitive from society who had been dismissed from West Point in 1843, had subsequently roamed the world, probably as a merchant seaman, and then in 1849 had wandered into the El Paso Valley, where he lived for the next dozen years or so. It drew its substance from Dexter's letters written between September, 1854, and January,

1857; and it gave a running account of his reported experiences at Frontera, where he operated a "rancho" for a time, and at Ysleta, where he lived during most of his sojourn along the El Paso border. Part I also made clear Dexter's discontent with "this heaven forsaken country" in spite of his success as a dry goods merchant, a grain speculator, and a holder of many public offices.

Part I concluded with an extended quotation from Dexter's letter of January 20, 1857, detailing a gunfight in which he had killed his adversary in self-defense, and with a sort of postscript (written six days later) stating that soon after the gunfight the people "forced . . . upon me [an office] with the high sounding title of [county] judge."

PART II: *A Man Without a Country*

It was January 20, 1857, and Henry Dexter was writing a letter to his sister in Illinois. He had just finished a long passage describing the gunfight that had occurred four months previously (on September 22, 1856). He had mentioned the "sad event" in a letter written on October 1, but had dismissed it with a "Do not be alarmed, sissy. I am as well as ever. . . ." On this day – and obviously in response to his sister's expressions of concern and her urging that he return to Illinois – he explained the particulars of the gunfight and now proceeded to a statement which seems wholly out of character: "After this can you blame me for acting the part of Noah's dove? I have found a resting place and am tired of moving. . . . I want rest and quiet and have a holy horror of leaving my cozy little home, even to travel, as I am often required to do by my business. . . ."

Throughout his previous letters Dexter had consistently proclaimed himself an inveterate vagabond who had no "home." He had been living in the El Paso Valley for almost eight years, but had repeatedly referred to it as a foreign country. He had steadfastly remained a stranger in an alien land, maintaining a condescending attitude toward both the native population and the trickle of newcomers who were settling near Magoffinsville and its nearby community sometimes called Franklin.

Had Dexter experienced a change of heart? It would seem so, for the next section of this letter gives further evidence of his new resolve. "I often think seriously" of marriage, he wrote. "Should I visit

you with malice aforethought, intent upon getting a wife (what a word) who in your region would . . . forsake all the comforts of civilization for a home in this vast wilderness where there is not sufficient timber to make an oxcart? Certainly no young lady in her senses, and old ones we have here. . . . As for living in your community now, after having passed 18 years without the pale of society, it is too absurd an idea to be entertained for a moment."

And so it was that Henry Dexter stayed a while longer in the treeless "wilderness," getting on with his life and continuing his letters to his sister – letters that provide much interesting commentary on life in the El Paso region of the mid-nineteenth century and on the disruptions brought by the Civil War.

Dexter's letter of September 24, 1857, contained an enclosure, a daguerreotype, and this explanation: "Having occasion to ride some 15 miles on business, I stumbled just at twilight upon an Ambro operator. It was getting dark and having no time to change dress or compose the working suit I wore, I hastily dismounted, took a seat, and you perceive the result.... This likeness, if it affords you any consolation to know it, is pronounced a good one."*

"...who...would...forsake all the comforts of civilization for a home in this vast wilderness where there is not sufficient timber to make an oxcart?"

Next come Dexter's comments on the weather: "Since the first of August we have had hardly a day without rain. Our river went almost dry, the crops were fast going to ruin when the rain came in torrents and lasted until the 10th of the present month, flooding the whole country and leaving it impassable for some days. With saving the corn and other conveniences was mixed a little alloy in the form of losing nearly 1/3 of the wheat. We have no stables, barns or outhouses . . . and everything is exposed to the weather."

Moving on to another subject, he mentioned his adopted son, a native boy whom Dexter had spoken of in a previous letter, remarking

*Editor's note: A reproduction of the daguerreotype hangs in the El Paso County Commissioners Court, and a copy of it was published in the Summer 1993 *Password*.

at that time that he was trying to teach the boy English. This letter states that "I have him now in an English school." This school, we learn from another letter, was run by a young native who had been sent, through Dexter's help and influence, to San Antonio to be educated. Dexter complained about his adopted son's wild behavior and aversion to study, but added: "I have hopes, however, of . . . making a white man of him."

A remark like this startles the reader of the 1990s, but it serves to vivify a widespread attitude of the 1850s. And it also provides a clue to Dexter's political persuasion, a persuasion that would become a critical factor in his life and ultimately compel him to forsake his "cozy little home" in the El Paso Valley. Earlier, on May 21, 1856, Dexter had expressed his strong admiration for United States Senator Stephen A. Douglas, who had sponsored the Kansas-Nebraska bill which advanced the principle of "popular sovereignty," allowing settlers in the Territories to decide on the issue of slavery. By early 1858 Dexter had purchased considerable land in Arizona and was looking forward to the area's organization into a Territory. He believed, no doubt, that Douglas would support this action, making it possible for settlers there to decide for or against slavery. However, Dexter's high regard for Senator Douglas turned to violent hatred because in the next session of Congress the senator did nothing about the status of Arizona. "What a pity," Dexter would write on February 7, 1858, "that a man of his talents and acquirements should have so far forgotten . . . his country's interests as . . . to have sold his honor and reputation . . . to the black-breasted Republicans."

Meanwhile, in 1857, Dexter's life in the "vast wilderness" was gradually becoming less uncomfortable. In a letter dated October 9, he wrote that he was no longer troubled by Indian depredations and that "There are now many settlements forming and three military posts upon the route. The mail passes over it in [every?] ten days and heavily laden wagons in from 30 to 40." He was also pleased to tell his sister (on November 26) that "we have not one nuisance with which you are overstocked. Banks. Thank God they are not permitted within the borders of our state by our Constitution and laws."

Nevertheless, there were plenty of nuisances in the El Paso Valley of that time, and one of them had to do with the acute shortage of reading material and the unscrupulous behavior that this shortage provoked. On June 5, 1858, Dexter reminded his sister that newspapers were insecure wrappers for packages sent through the mail –

and "more so when coming from the States upon a frontier where papers are a scarce commodity and everyone is anxious to hear the news. Wrappers with private names are but little respected, even when franked by an M.C. [Member of Congress] or other authority. And it is almost impossible to trace it up to the perpetrator although the laws are severe." He added that popular magazines were also a "rare commodity in this diggings. To illustrate, I have subscribed five times to Harpers and in nine years have received two copies. It is annoying and provoking, but where is the remedy? I think of adopting a plan, . . . which is to request my friends and publishers to put all [printed] material in envelopes and pay letter postage. . . ."

Dexter had big news for his sister in his letter of January 11, 1859. He began by thanking her for a shirt she had sent him, telling her that it had arrived "just in time for my wedding!! What! you exclaim – Henry married!! Your sister's name is Maria Soledad. Her maiden name was Lujan, pronounced Lu-han. Her age at the time of the wedding (Saturday, January 1st 2 p.m.) 13 years, 8 months and 14 1/2 days. . . ." He explained that he had taken "care in making a selection," had "observed" her for two years, and for "a year past" had given her lessons in English. "For the country a better selection could not be made," he declared, and then described her as "tractable, an orphan, and with very few Mexican ties."

By the time of his next letter, May 25, 1859, Dexter had accepted an appointment as deputy United States marshal, along with a clerkship of the District Court. But his bride, he regretted to say, was experiencing poor health. On August 15 he wrote that her health had not improved, and on October 13 he was able to report only "slight improvement." In this same letter he mentioned a recent election, in which he had been "most ruthlessly, barbarously elected with malice aforethought" mayor of Ysleta. "What a humbug – another care. I hope, however, to rid myself of it soon." On January 26, 1860, Dexter wrote that his wife "walked out today somewhat improved in health, to witness with me our planting of early peas for May eating."

War clouds hung over the United States, and Dexter, by now a rabid Southern sympathizer, had developed a morbid hatred for all things Yankee – his sister excepted. In April, 1860, he cautioned her to direct her mail by a "roundabout road" to lessen the chances of it being tampered with. "I would fain keep my letters from the tainted atmosphere of Yankee blue-black-hypocritical-amalgamation-abolitiondom

if possible." Despite the fact that he was still postmaster under the government he held in such abysmal contempt, he accepted the job of census-taker in 1860 for the Eleventh Judicial District, which included El Paso and Presidio counties covering almost 35,000 square miles. The report was due in Washington by August 1, and Dexter complained that all the traveling "gave me a very unfavorable opinion staging rapidly over a rough road by day and night with 'my old bones'."

On November 29, 1860, shortly after Lincoln had been elected President of the United States, Dexter wrote a long letter to his sister, much of it devoted to impassioned expressions of his political views. He asked her to send mail by way of Independence and Santa Fe, where it would be safe "until Missouri takes active steps in seceding, as she doubtless will if the cowardly rail and nation splitter does not soon retire to the position nature intended him for, and from which he has been dragged by a few designing, traitorous demagogues to be used as a tool for foisting themselves into power and positions which the people have always shown the good sense to prohibit."

By this time, Dexter had formed a partnership with a Spaniard from Barcelona and had expanded his business ventures into Mesilla and into Mexico. He informed his sister that "I sent you a copy of our [Mesilla] 'Times' the other day. You do not see my name as I do not advertise. Everybody knows me and it is here a useless expense – but if you wish to have the style you may: 'Dexter and Alert,' 'H.L.D. and Jose Alert' in Mesilla – "H.L.D. and Co.' in Ysleta and 'Dexter and Yager,' El Balle, Mexico." His next sentences indicate that the businesses were doing well: "If the times improve I can go this fall to the states. Had I been single I would have gone this year and probably remained at Montgomery or Richmond for a change from frontier life. I am now, tho, tied faster than ever but more at liberty so far as leaving business is concerned than I ever was in my life."

In this same letter he noted that a few California families, "emigrants returned to Texas, are passing almost daily with a great deal of property, [and] have concluded to settle with us and will prove, I hope, an acquisition of mutual value and advantage."

In February, 1861, Texas seceded from the Union and joined the Confederacy. For the most part, this action was heartily applauded in the El Paso area, which, as C. L. Sonnichsen states in his *Pass of the North*, "was as Southern as Savannah." The local Confederates commandeered the units stationed at Fort Bliss and marched them to San

Antonio. In the meantime, Lieutenant Colonel John R. Baylor of the 2nd Regiment of the Texas Mounted Rifles arrived at Fort Bliss, and took command of the occupying Confederate troops there. He then led his units to Mesilla and ousted the Union forces on July 25, 1861. Baylor immediately assumed the governorship of the promptly-designated Territory of Arizona. Dexter, who had left Ysleta to join the action, was appointed by Baylor as justice of the peace at Mesilla.

Four days after the battle, a tabloid-sized, one-page EXTRA edition of the Mesilla, Arizona, *Times* published a long account of the battle, and on the blank side of the EXTRA Dexter scratched a brief letter to his sister. After acknowledging receipt of her recent letter, he waxed eloquent on the subject of victory: "You see now how right and justice contend with error, injustice and rabid fanaticism. . . . The minions of that fanatical horde attempting to ride roughshod over the land will ever flee before stout hands and willing hearts who are in defense of their firesides and little ones, risking their lives and fortunes, asking no pay or reward but the approval of their own consciences and the smiles of the fair and an all-wise and just providence. I can write no more at present, being so fatigued for want of sleep and rest for some days past."

The *Times* headlines proclaimed the battle of Mesilla a tremendous victory – ARIZONA IS FREE AT LAST!! – FORT FILLMORE IN THE HANDS OF THE TEXAS FORCES. The feature story told how the United States troops crossed the Rio Grande on July 25th and were advancing for an attack in the southern part of the town. Then a flag of truce was sent to "our position with the modest demand to surrender. . . . The reply was that if they wished the town to come and take it. One Confederate company opened fire . . . throwing them into confusion and finally into retreat. . . . They were disheartened . . . and as night was falling they drew off their whole force . . . retreating towards Fort Stanton, but were intercepted on the way and surrendered unconditionally to the Confederates." In a separate article, editor Frank Higgins wrote: "The excitement of the last five days leaves our citizens in a general glow of joy and congratulations."

The euphoria of the victory at Mesilla was not long-lived. Although Confederate General H. H. Sibley followed Baylor to the West and attempted to take New Mexico in 1862, his efforts failed and he retreated in disgrace back to San Antonio. Simultaneously, about 1500 California volunteers, known as the California Column, marched eastward under Colonel James H. Carleton and reoccupied the area,

TIMES--EXTRA.

MESILLA, ARIZONA, MONDAY, JULY 29, 1861.

THE WAR AT HOME.

BATTLE OF MESILLA!

ARIZONA IS FREE AT LAST!!

Fort Fillmore in the hands of the Texas Forces.

$500,000 worth of property taken!

Eleven Companies of U. S. Regulars taken prisoners by four Companies of Texas Volunteers, without the loss of a man on the Confederate side!!

Lieut. Col. Baylor, Commanding the Confederate forces at Fort Bliss, Texas, left there on the 24th instant, with the forces under his command, for the Mesilla Valley, with the design of protecting the citizens of Arizona, and relieving them of the oppression and presence of a large force of United States troops, and to prevent the further consentration of troops at this point.

The force under his command was some 300 men, as follows: Capt. Stalford's Company of Mounted Rifles, 85 men; Capt. Hardeman's Company of Mounted Rifles, 90 men; Lt. Bennett, with a detachment of Capt. Teele's Artillery, 38 men; (they did not bring their cannon, but were mounted); Capt. Coopwood's Spy company, 40 men; added to these were a number of the citizens of Mesilla and El Paso; in all, a out 300 men.

On the night of the 24th a position had been taken by the Confederate troops, within six hundred yards of Fort Fillmore, and pickets were placed out and every precaution taken to storm the Fort by surprise the next morning at day-break. The plan would have been a complete success, but for the desertion of a picket who went into the Fort and gave the alarm! The fort was alive in a few minutes, and it was evident the surprise was a failure.

The Confederate force then moved across the river, and at daylight took the town of Santo Tomas. Two Companies of U. S. troops had been stationed there but the birds had flown, evidently in great haste.—Clothing, provisions, ammunition and supplies were left behind in considerable quantities. Eight prisoners were taken, disarmed and then discharged, after being sworn not to fight against the Confederacy, Col. Baylor telling them that he had rather fight them than keep them.

About ten o'clock the Confederate forces entered Mesilla, and were received with every manifestation of joy by the citizens. Vivas and hurras rang them welcome from every point. Preparations were immediately made to receive an attack from the U. S. troops; and the citizens offered all the forage and supplies that they had at their command.

BATTLE OF MESILLA.

The United States troops were reported crossing the river about noon of the 25th. About 5 o'clock the clouds of dust indicated the enemy were advancing for an attack towards the Southern part of the city. The whole force was moved to that point and every preparation made to give them the warmest of receptions. Several of the principal streets of Mesilla converge at the Southern end of the town, the houses forming an angle and are quite scattered, old corrals and the proximity of the corn fields, make the position a very advantages one for defence. The companies were stationed on the tops of the adobe houses and behind the corrals, Capt. Coopwoods company was mounted. The citizens posted themselves on the tops of the houses on the principal streets prepared to render their assistance.

The enemy advanced to within 500 yards of our position and halted and formed in line of battle with two howitzers in the centre and the infantry, and on the wings cavalry, the whole force appearing to be about 500 men. A flag of truce was then sent to our position with the modest demand to surrender the town unconditionally, the reply was "that if they wished the town to come and take it." They unmasked their guns, and and commenced firing bombs and grape into a town crowded with women and children, without having in accordance with an invariable rule of civilized warfare given notice to remove the women and children to a place of safety. Several shells were thrown in different parts of the town, fortunately without doing any injury to a single individual. Two companies were ordered to take their position on the top of the houses on the main Plaza. The first shell thrown struck on the top of a building on which was stationed a portion of Captain Teele's company and exploded.

After firing a couple of rounds of grape at the more advanced position of our force, the cavalry of the enemy made a charge and had advanced to within three hundred yards of a corral behind which Capt. Hardeman's company were stationed. From 40 to 60 shots were fired by this company, killing four and wounding four of the enemy, throwing them into confusion and finally into retreat, their officers vainly trying to rally them. The order was given to charge four times to no purpose and they retired in confusion carrying with them the dead and wounded.

Capt. Coopwood's company had been continually employed in deploying among the houses and corrals, first appearing mounted and then on foot, and appearing in many different directions. This and other movements, and the appearance of men both far and near, at many different points, succeded in greatly deceiving the enemy as to our real force. They were disheartened by their ill success in the charge, and as night was falling they drew off their whole force in good order, in the direction of Fort Fillmore.

EVACUATION OF FORT FILLMORE.

At one o'clock on the morning of the 27th Maj. Lynde evacuated Fort Fillmore with all his command; previously destroying much valuable property and munitions of war. The soldiers destroyed much of their Company property, muskets, clothing, a blacksmith shop, bakery, and one of the Quartermaster's store rooms had been completely burned down. The majority of the buildings were uninjured, and can be immediately occupied by the Confederase forces. The Hospital stores, medicines and furniture were most completely broken up, and nearly all the arms and a large quantity of ammunition were destroyed. A great deal of valuable commissary stores and other property was unharmed, to the amount of several thousand dollars.

THE RETREAT.

The U. S. troops retreated in the direction of Fort Stanton, and were seen by our scouts immediately after daylight, eight or ten miles east of Los Cruces, in the mountains. The whole Command of Confederate troops were ordered in pursuit, and crowded on in full chase after the fugitives. The road lay over the tablelands and mountains to a pass in the Organos chain, by way of San Augustine Springs, over a route where there was no water, and the day was excessively warm.

Some six or seven miles on this side of the San Augustine Springs, stragglers of the U. S. Infantry were overtaken and the way to the Springs had the appearance of a complete route. Guns were strung along the road and cartridge boxes. The six miles to the Springs was a succession of charges: men were taken prisoners and disarmed in squads; the artillery was captured and the greater portion of the Infantry were taken before the main command was reached.

THE SURRENDER.

Maj. Lynde was camped near the San Augustine Springs and had still some four hundred men with him who formed in battle array on the appearance of the Confederate troops. Advance was made to charge on them by our troops, and they had reached within 800 yards, with eager spirits for the fray, when a flag of truce was raised by the U. S. column, desiring to know on what conditions our commander would receive a surrender. The reply was, An unconditional surrender —the same terms they had endeavored to dictate to the Confederate forces. This was sought to be modified by the U. S. Commander, which request was refused further than they would be allowed two hours to remove their women and children to a place of safety.—The U. S. Commander finally agreed to an unconditional surrender.

In brief, during this day 11 Companies of U. S. regular troops, mounted and foot, mustering 700 effective men, surrendered to 280 Confederates, 4 pieces of cannon, arms, equipments, 200 cavalry horses, mules and wagons, and 27 head of beef cattle. The men and officers were disappointed in one thing alone—that the victory was so easily won.

All these important movements and the great success, have been made and gained without the loss of one drop of blood on the Confederate side.

Another Apache Massacre.---The California Mail destroyed --- Seven men murdered.

An Express from Pino Alto brings the appalling intelligence that the Mail bound for Los Angeles, California, which left Mesilla on the 20th, had been taken near Cook's Springs by the Apaches and the guard murdered. The Express passed Cook's Springs on the 27th, and found six bodies in the cañon near the Springs, stripped of their clothing, and three of them scalped. They had been killed several days. The coach was destroyed.

The following persons left Mesilla with the coach and are all supposed to have been murdered: Conductor Free Thomas, Joe Roscher, M. Champion, John Portell, Robt. Avlin, Emmett Mills, and John Wilson. They were experienced frontiersmen, picked for the dangerous duty they had to perform, and undoubtedly gave the Indians a most desperate struggle. They were general favorites in the Rio Grande Valley, and their loss spreads a general gloom over the community.

The Santa Fe mail on the last down trip was taken by a party of men under charge of Capt. Geo. Frazier, by Col. Baylor's order. The private letters were undisturbed, and only official letters were opened. The mail property will be returned to the contractor, and there will be hereafter no detention to the regular trips of this line.

THE TIMES

FRANK HIGGINS, Editor.

The excitement of the last five days leaves our citizens in a general glow of joy and congratulation. The rapid movements of Lieut. Col. Baylor and his Command, has changed our position from one of fear and anxiety to wild enthusiasm—the dread of armed oppression and outrage give place to the brightest hopes and most confident security. The transition from darkness to light has been sudden, skillful and glorious. We are now delivered from the hands of our enemies, and our most sanguine expectations realized. Our seven-starred banner, instead of being trampled in the dust by the minions of an Abolition despot, is bathed in new glories. Arizona has thrown off the chains which have so long bound her. She can now sow the seed to reap a confident harvest of plenty and peace. The present Confederate Congress will give us a Territorial organization; the gallant Confederate troops have given us freedom from oppression; they will in proper time scourge our fair land of Indian marauders; the capital of the country will receive new impulses; every field of labor will feel the invigorating influence; the immense resources of the country will be developed; and a golden age of prosperity and progress will be our heritage, instead of studied neglect and a continued series of misfortunes. Well may our citizens rejoice—its a full theme of joy and congratulations. We have changed from sorrow to gladness, from death to life.

To Lieut. Col. Baylor and his gallant command, Arizona and Arizonians are under an endless debt of gratitude. The Confederate States may be justly proud of such officers and such soldiers. Texas may be most justly proud of her hero sons. They have been tried in the furnace and have proved themselves stirling metal. Lieut. Col. Baylor has proved himself an officer superior to any and all military emergencies. He has outmanevered, out-witted and outgeneralled a host of old experienced officers. With 300 men, without artillery he has defeated a force of seven hundred regulars, who were disciplined to the highest degree, who had the most improved arms, and were provided with artillery. The plain fact speaks volumes in itself. He has won the highest confidence of the people of Arizona, and their gratitude.

To Maj. Walker we cannot accord too great a measure of praise. His indefatigable energy was everywhere evident. He was untiring in his exertions; ever active, ever watchful, and ever ready. He has proved himself worthy of any position and master of any complications it might present. The officers, one and all, has stamped with the same die. Cool but dauntless they would die before they would surrender their swords.

The men are heroes. They might be killed one by one but only thus defeated. They are not a selection of men who have been enlisted from necessity's sake, but from patriotism and honor they are marshalled in defence of their country's rights. They are not fighting for pay but for principle. Men and officers are patriots and equals.

We have never seen a body of men assembled under any circumstances, who are anything like them in decorum. Their steadiness is extraordinary. Not a single instance of drunkenness, no disorderness, no wild follies, have met our eyes. Though they are mostly young, they act with the gravity of age, and in every respect like gentlemen.

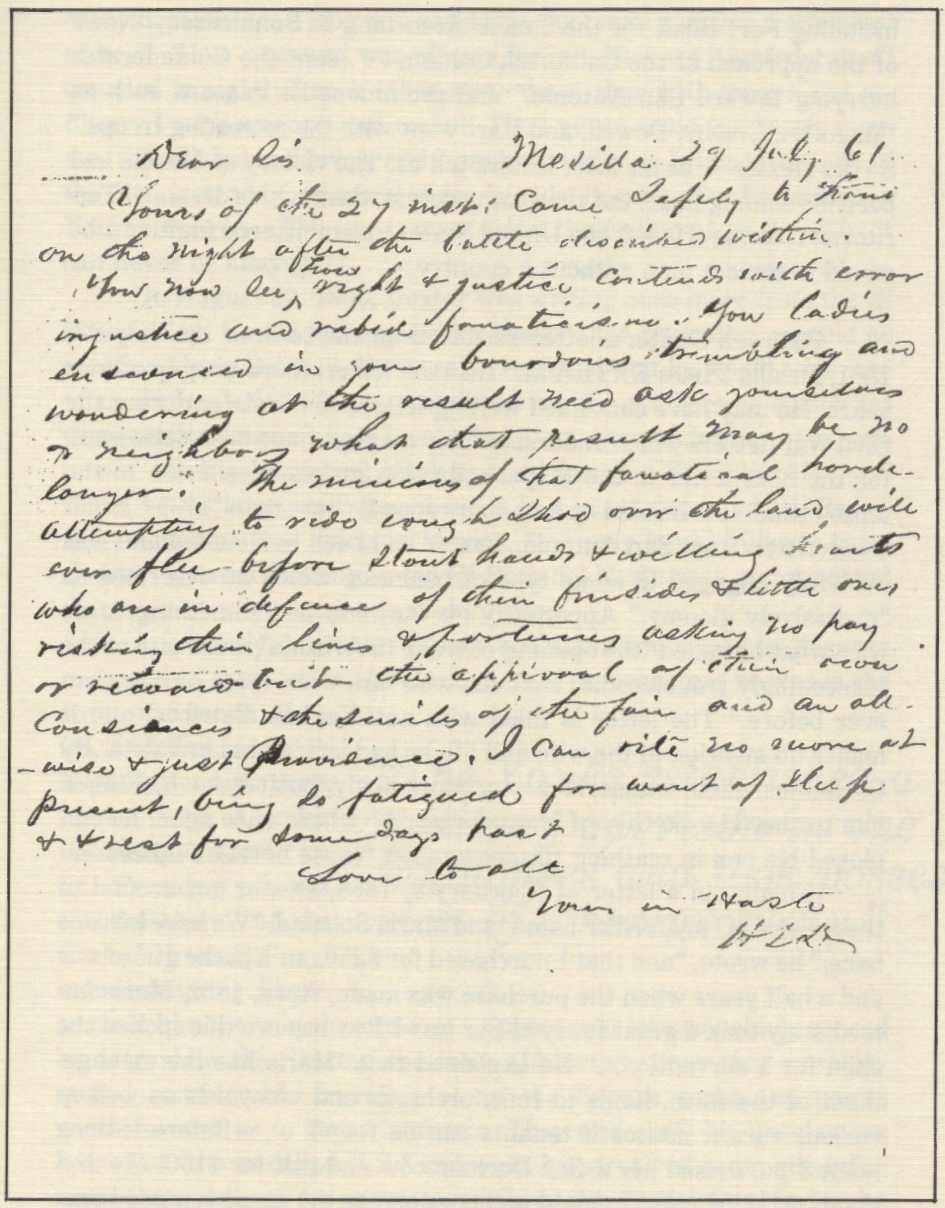
We are proud of them, one and all. Such officers such men, can never *never* be conquered. Every battle field must be a victory, every campaign a success.

From Pino Alto.

An express arrived from Pino Alto on the 29th. The reports from the mines were never more favorable than at present. A correspondent writes, who is heavily interested in quartz mining, "nothing is want ng on my part but machinery to make my independent fortune." Mr. V. A. Mastin is with the Express, and on behalf of the citizens of Pino Alto, will tender a company of volunteers from that place for the Confederate service to Lieut. Col. Baylor.

On Monday last Henry Holmes killed a Mexican desperado, by the name of Antonio, on the Rio Mimbres. The Mexican had been boasting of having committed many murders, and our informant says the killing was perfectly justifiable.

NOT IN THEIR LINE.—The New York News, says: that out of one hundred and eleven editors and reporters connected with the New York Tribune, World, Sun Courier and Enquirer, Evening Post and Commercial all of which are ferocious war journals, the number who have enlisted for the war, all added up together amount to precisely *none!*



Dear Sis. Mesilla 29 July 61

Yours of the 27 inst: Come safely to hand on the night after the battle described within.

Now now Sis, Right & justice contends with error injustice and rabid fanaticism. You Ladies ensconced in your boudoirs trembling and wondering at the result need ask yourselves a neighbor what that result may be no longer. The minions of that fanatical horde attempting to ride rough shod over the land will ever flee before stout hands & willing hearts who are in defence of their firesides & little ones risking their lives & fortunes asking no pay or reward but the approval of their own Consciences & the smiles of the fair and an all-wise & just Providence. I can write no more at present, being so fatigued for want of sleep & rest for some days past

Love to all

Yours in haste

W Lea

Reproduced on the opposite page is the one-page EXTRA edition of the Mesilla Times *published on July 29, 1861, four days after the Confederate victory there. On the back of this EXTRA, Dexter wrote a brief letter, reproduced above. (Courtesy Art Leibson)*

including Fort Bliss, for the Union. According to Sonnichsen, "News of the approach of the California Column . . . sent the Confederates hurrying toward San Antonio," and prominent El Pasoans such as "Magoffin, Crosby, Dowell, and Hart went with the retreating troops." So did Dexter – as his later letters tell us. The victory at Mesilla had been his shining hour, but then came defeat, dashing his dream of Territorial Arizona. He left the United States an embittered fugitive who would become a man without a country.

Between Dexter's letter scribbled on the back of the July 29, 1861, Mesilla *Times* EXTRA and the next letter, there is a gap of four years. He may have continued writing letters to his sister during the Civil War (letters which understandably may not have been delivered), for the next letter in the Mapel collection makes no allusion to the lapsed time. It is headed by a no-more specific date than "1865," and it was written from San Antonio. Dexter had been in Houston and was evidently engaged in some type of business, which he described as "excessively gloomy." Apparently his business had something to do with what he called "the opening of trade to Arizona" – in spite of the "exceedingly troublesome" Indians, who "are even more daring than ever before." The letter is filled with anti-Yankee diatribes, and it makes no mention of the wife and life he had left behind in Ysleta. By Christmas, 1865, wanderlust – or more likely, business – had taken him to the "Heroic City of Matamorros,"** where once again he employed his pen in scathing tirades against "those horrid Yankees."

Finally, in a letter of February 8, 1866, Dexter got around to the subject of "my former home" and Maria Soledad. "We have but one babe," he wrote, "and that I purchased for $250, an Apache girl of one and a half years when the purchase was made, April, 1862. Maria immediately took a great fancy to her and I fear has ere this spoiled the child for a servant. . . ." He explained that "Maria has the management of the farm, lands to rent, orchards and vineyards as well as various vacant houses if tenants can be found. . . . Before leaving home I purchased her a fine Durham cow and calf for $150. My dry-goods establishment I closed and possibly, as the stand is a good one, it is ere this occupied." He added that "The Yanks established a military garrison in one of my houses and took possession of other property." Then he wrote briefly of his flight from Ysleta: "The story

**Editor's note: Newspapers of this time used this spelling, but the town had been named for Mariano Matamoros, a patriot priest.

of my departure is a long one and some day I may give you a rehearsal of it. . . . How a reward was offered for me. How we [Confederates?] traveled in sight of each other some days, they with troops and artillery, I with wagons and escort. They never could lay hands upon me, the villainous thieves, and I am here today as living testimony of the fact, instead of, as many of my friends, lingering to the death in a Yankee dungeon. The war is over – but the feeling engendered by it can never be allayed."

On August 20, 1866, Dexter was writing once more from the El Paso Valley. He did not explain his reasons for returning, nor did he mention Maria Soledad. He merely remarked that he would take care of an accumulation of correspondence "until I can become somewhat more settled or know how I can employ my time under our new masters – black soldiers and black-hearted freedom Schrickers[?]. . . ." Three weeks later, on September 10, in a letter datelined "El Paso," Dexter said he was living in Mexico, "the only land of liberty hereabouts." He was farming in the El Paso del Norte area and reported that harvest prospects seemed very good.

Apparently, however, Dexter could not find a way to "become . . . settled," for a letter of February, 1867, reveals that he was in the state of Sonora, Mexico, in company with "my old friend, Sr. Juan Muños, who is under marching orders by Sr. President Juarez to take charge of the Custom House at Guaymas next Spring. I hope to meet him there in the summer." Subsequent letters, widely spaced by date, show that Dexter's business affairs (whatever they were) required considerable traveling along the Sonora coast and points south, as well as to Baja California. They also show his unrelenting hatred of "the so-called U.S." and what he perceived as its vile influence. Commenting, for example, on the state of affairs in Mexico, he wrote that "Confiscations and persecutions are the order of the day and these people are learning rapidly from Yankeedom all wickedness."

"The Yanks established a military garrison in one of my houses and took possession of other property."

The final letter in the collection is a very brief one, dated December 27, 1869, and written on board a steamer in the Gulf of California. In it he tells his sister that Guaymas would continue to be

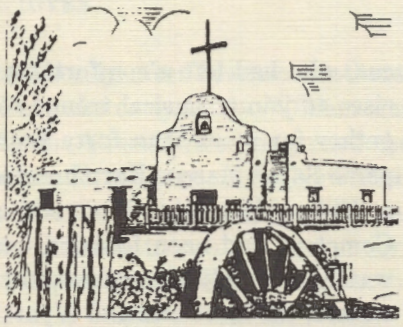
his headquarters and that he had "contracted the most severe cough and cold." With these words, the self-appointed man without a country disappears from recorded history.

In some ways Henry L. Dexter was similar to other settlers in the El Paso Valley of the mid-nineteenth century. Adventurous and enterprising, he acquired considerable property, established a lucrative business, accepted responsible public offices, and married a girl who was native to the area. In short, he built a solid foundation for a meaningful personal life and useful civic service. Then a great Civil War compelled him – and many of his fellow settlers – to seek refuge in other climes. But in the aftermath of that War, the similarities end, and Dexter's story takes on the elements of tragedy. Unlike such men as Ben Dowell, James Wiley Magoffin, and Simeon Hart, Dexter's inflexible opinions and deep-set prejudices blinded him to the value of the accomplishments he had made and also to the verdant potential of the treeless "wilderness." Unlike those other men who returned to their hard-earned, much-loved El Paso Valley foundations, Dexter would not make his peace with the "new masters" and reclaim his "cozy little home," his family, property, and business affairs. For him, the waters of the El Paso Valley had become too polluted and too bitter to swallow.

A footnote to the Dexter story may be found in the El Paso County Deed Record Book E. It is recorded on page 216 that Maria Soledad Lujan Dexter obtained a divorce from Henry L. Dexter on September 22, 1873, on grounds of having been abandoned on August 19, 1862, and left destitute. It is also recorded that her husband had taken eight mule teams, horses, equipment worth $3000, a carriage, and $500 in gold and silver. Maria Soledad was awarded her share of the community property, which included considerable real estate.

As to what happened to that property, to Maria Soledad, to Dexter's adopted son, and to the "purchased" Apache "babe," no records have yet been found.

ART LEIBSON, a frequent contributor to *Password,* is an attorney-turned-journalist. A longtime resident of El Paso, he retired several years ago from the staff of the *El Paso Times.*



The Bloom Southwest Jewish Archives

by Abraham S. Chanin

Editor's note: The following essay appeared originally in the June 1992 issue of The Roundup Quarterly, *a journal published by Western Writers of America, Inc. It appears here with the permission of the author and the publisher.*

How did it come about that Marshal Wyatt Earp of Tombstone is buried in a Jewish cemetery? Could Jim Levy, a gunfighter from Dublin, Ireland, really be a Jewish pioneer of the desert Southwest? And is it true that an early member of the Zeckendorf family scalped an Apache?

The answers, often sought by researchers, are to be found at the Bloom Southwest Jewish Archives at the University of Arizona in Tucson. Although the archive is only five years old, it has become an important research center for writers, the news media, the general public researching their roots and, of course, faculty and students.

So why is it that the celebrated Marshal Earp rests quietly in the Hills of Eternity Cemetery in Colma, California? While still in Tombstone the marshal got together with one Josephine Sarah Mar-

cus, who had left a comfortable German-Jewish home in San Francisco to join a musical troupe touring Arizona. The couple lived together for more than forty years and when the marshal died Josephine Sarah Marcus Earp insisted that he be buried in the family plot at Hills of Eternity. By an odd quirk of history the Hills of Eternity Cemetery had been founded under the leadership of Michael Goldwater – grandfather of Senator Barry Goldwater. And so the Goldwaters, the Marcuses and Wyatt Earp all lie near each other in northern California.

Generally, pioneer Jews in the Southwest are pictured as peddlers with little packs on their backs. The vast files in the archives swiftly refute that and so do the facts and figures. First it should be understood that in the mid-1800s towns in the Southwest were widely separated, and it is difficult to imagine men walking a hundred miles between towns under a sun that could hit 120 degrees. More important is the historical fact that early Jewish pioneers in the Southwest – the Bloom Archives covers Arizona, New Mexico and West Texas – contributed in almost every way to the development of the territories and the states.

Jewish pioneers in the desert Southwest were lawyers, doctors, politicians, bankers, miners, developers, judges, cattlemen, hotel operators, lawmen, including deputies and policemen, and yes, they were sometimes on the wrong side of the law.

One of the earliest pioneer Jews in the West was Nathan Benjamin Appel, who started his career as a merchant in New Mexico and Arizona. In Tucson he became chief of police as well as being a cattleman and mining entrepreneur. The story of Nathan Benjamin Appel is yet to be written in full, and material about him in the archives is voluminous. Chief Appel hardly fits the mold of the mythical frontier Jewish peddler.

Jim Levy is another pioneer Jew who refutes the peddler myth. He killed a couple of men over arguments before coming to Arizona and was known as a dangerous gunfighter. There are great newspaper stories in the archives about how Jim Levy was gunned down in ambush in early Tucson.

The Zeckendorf story is dramatic, even legendary. Today William Zeckendorf, III, presides over vast realty holdings from coast to coast. It was his father who was the dynamo in real estate promotions, but it was William, Sr., who was the great figure of pioneer days in the Southwest. William came to the United States at age four-

teen and journeyed to New Mexico shortly after his two brothers, Aaron and Louis, arrived in Santa Fe in the early 1850s. William was a scholarly young man but realizing the Union's need he joined the New Mexico Militia to fight Confederate forces in northern New Mexico. After the war he rejoined his brothers in merchandising and eventually moved to Tucson in Territorial Arizona to run the Zeckendorf store, which soon became the most important merchandising establishment in the area.

Zeckendorf became a leading political figure in Arizona, serving in the legislature and heading the Democratic Party in Tucson. He also became a legendary figure of the frontier. He often carried a gun and once when he heard the patter of feet on the roof of his store, he did not call the police; he simply pulled out his gun and fired through the ceiling. The robbers dropped their loot, jumped from the roof and sped away. When Apaches raided one of his wagon trains, Mr. Z., as he was fondly called, raced to the scene of the fight and ended the day by scalping an Apache and carrying the trophy back to Tucson with him. He was a hero to the local populace, because the Apache was the dreaded enemy at the time in the Arizona Territory.

Before going any further with stories of those days, let me relate how the archive was established. When I was working on my first book, *This Land, These Voices,* I came to the realization while doing oral interviews that history had often missed recording the stories of Jewish pioneers. Few writers had researched their contributions to the Southwest, and so, after doing a great deal of probing in old files, I understood the need to create an archive for this history. The University of Arizona accepted my proposal; I found a sponsoring family related to early pioneers, and so the Leona G. and David A. Bloom Southwest Jewish Archives were established.

Our holdings were quickly enriched by the donation of the most important collections of Southwest Jewish archival material – vital and expansive files from the late Floyd Fierman of El Paso, from Harriet and Fred Rochlin (who wrote the fine book *Pioneer Jews*), and the research data of Arizona historians.

As the stories were placed on our shelves we came to realize that the history of pioneer Jews in the Southwest was at least 150 years old. We often used that figure in lectures, but then as the Quincentennial year approached we uncovered startling new facts. The voyages of Columbus opened the New World to Europeans – including Jews expelled from the Iberian peninsula. Even though they

were banned from coming to possessions of Spain in the New World, they came as secret or hidden Jews. There is solid evidence that hidden Jews were in the American Southwest as early as the 1590s. This would mean that a Jewish history of the Southwest is close to four hundred years old.

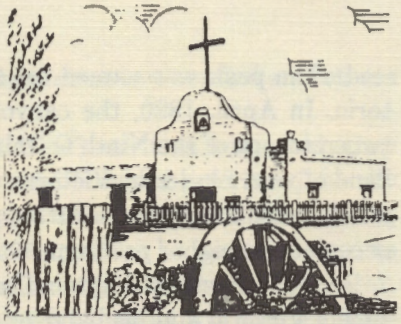
Expelled from Spain and Portugal, the *conversos* or converts settled throughout the western hemisphere – in South American countries, in the Caribbean, in Central America and in Nueva Espana (Mexico). As the Inquisition came to Lima, Peru, Columbia and Mexico City, the *conversos* began moving north.

This dramatic history has opened an entirely new area of research for the Bloom Archives. Hispanics who have been Catholics or Protestants for generations are coming to the archives to trace their heritage. Many ask about secret practices they have observed in their families – a grandmother secretly lighting candles on Friday nights, following Jewish burial customs, not eating pork or shellfish, or observing the ritual of circumcision.

To assist researchers and families seeking their roots, the archive is compiling a computerized record of family names listed by the Inquisition. These names come from records kept in the *archivos* in both Seville and Mexico City, and the project of compiling this information is expected to take at least two years. Because the Inquisition kept such excellent records, we are able to trace many names of today's families to names of those who appeared before the Inquisition. In many cases we have been able to research families in Arizona and New Mexico whose roots extend back through Mexico to Spain. While some families are anxious to trace their Jewish roots, some do not want to talk about past connections, and others are indifferent to the 'strange' customs they have seen practiced in their families.

Since there is much sensitivity involved, we have made it a practice not to seek out these hidden Jews but to wait until they come to the archives for information. Thus we have had many fascinating stories brought to us that we have recorded and filed. One woman who came in wanted to know about a silver amulet handed down from woman to woman in her family. It turned out that the amulet was a silver plate in the shape of the Ten Commandments. She was stunned when told that the writing was Hebrew. Reflecting on her past she remembered many strange observances in her family, customs which came from hundreds of years of following Jewish traditions in secret.

Continued on Page 142



The Search for Treasure in Victorio Peak

by Jim Eckles

Fantastic legends of lost gold and buried treasure abound in the West. Unlike many tales which have faded with time, the story of Victorio Peak's hidden trove in southern New Mexico continues to grow like a young cottonwood tree rooted at a desert spring. The treasure is said to contain thousands of gold bars stacked like firewood, countless Spanish artifacts and documents, as well as the skeletons of some forgotten group left behind to guard the hoard. Some say its value might be as much as three billion dollars. The actual inventory depends upon who is telling the story.

Best of all, the lost treasure isn't really lost. People who claim to know say that a short tunnel, just a few hundred feet long driven into the side of the peak, will reveal the eye-popping stash.

Victorio Peak is located about sixty-five miles northeast of Las Cruces, New Mexico. It is a small, undistinguished hill, hardly more than a pimple in the shallow Hembrillo Basin of the San Andres Mountains which stretch for about seventy miles along the west boundary of the White Sands Missile Range. Springs of fresh water occur in the basin, and for centuries Native Americans frequented the area. Evidence of their nomadic visits is revealed in the petroglyphs found on the rocks in the depths of Hembrillo Canyon.

The peak was named for the noted Apache warrior chief Victorio. In April, 1880, the canyon became the site of a skirmish between troops of the Ninth Cavalry headed by a Captain Carroll and a band of warriors led by Victorio. Seeking water for their parched men and horses, the American troops encountered the Apaches who had occupied the higher positions in the canyon. The battle began on April 7. Reinforcements of Captain Curwen McLellan arrived that day, and finally Victorio and his band retreated into Mexico. Later that year, on October 15, Victorio was killed by Mexican forces.

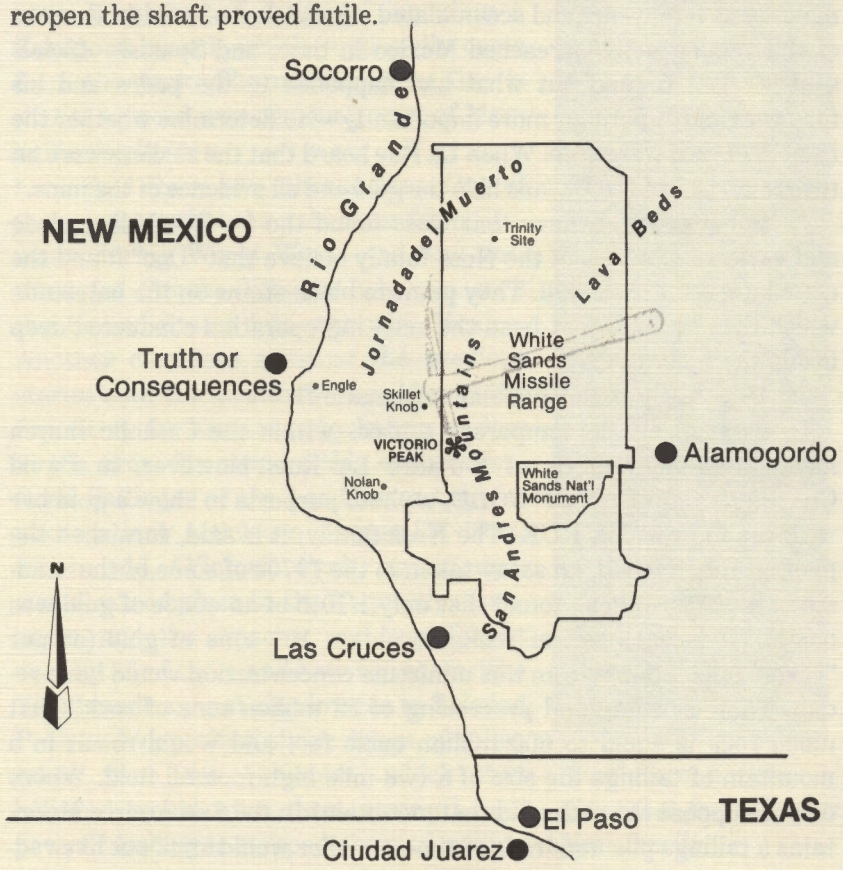
Victorio Peak lies about five miles inside the western boundary of the missile range, which is the largest military installation in the United States, with more than 3200 square miles in area. The range itself also has historic interest: it was the site where the first atomic bomb was tested on July 16, 1945, and – later – where German V-2 rockets took American science into outer space for the first time. Today the missile range tests equipment for the United States military, NASA, several foreign countries, and private corporations. Most of the range, including Victorio Peak, is off-limits to the general public.

Many stories of lost gold start with an accidental discovery. This one is no different. The discovery is said to have occurred in November, 1937, when most of the land in this arid and sparsely settled area of New Mexico was open range. The discoverer was Milton E. Noss, better known as "Doc" (a title attached to him from a chiropodist practice in Hot Springs, now Truth or Consequences). As the story goes, "Doc" went hunting in the Hembrillo Basin one afternoon and climbed Victorio Peak to take a look around. It began to rain, and he took shelter in a small natural opening at the top of the peak. While he waited for the rain to stop, he felt air rising past him and became curious as to its source. He rolled a bolder aside and discovered a shaft leading down into the hill.

"Doc" later returned to the site with his wife, Ova, who remained at the entrance while he made his way down a tortuous route of cracks and ledges that after several hundred feet led him into a large cavern and several smaller "rooms." When he returned to the surface, he revealed to Ova that he had found a room "large enough to drive a train into" and that it contained chests filled with old Spanish coins, jewelry, and religious artifacts. He also told her that there were Spanish documents, Wells Fargo chests, and thousands of gold bars "stacked like cordwood." And, further, he said there were the remains

of at least twenty-seven human beings, some mummified and others reduced to skeletons.

According to the stories that "Doc" and Ova later told, they labored for two years to remove several hundred gold bars, usually one at a time, since each one weighed from forty to sixty pounds. "Doc" worked inside the peak while Ova, whom he never allowed to enter the treasure chambers, remained outside. In the dark of night, "Doc" would go off alone and bury the recovered bars in the basin surrounding Victorio Peak. He trusted no one. In 1939, Noss tried to open a narrow passage deep within the peak to make it easier to retrieve the treasures, but he evidently used too much explosive. A portion of the fissure collapsed, and, in the years following, efforts to reopen the shaft proved futile.



A map showing the location of Victorio Peak. (Courtesy Camille)

One of the obvious questions in this tale is "Where did all the supposed gold come from?" Since there are no extensive gold mines in the vicinity of Victorio Peak, how did 18,000 gold bars (the number that "Doc" estimated) end up inside its caverns?

The answer most frequently given centers on a young priest, Felipe La Rue, who, around 1800, was working as a missionary to a small Indian tribe near the present city of Chihuahua, Mexico. La Rue supposedly befriended an old Spanish soldier who, on his deathbed, told La Rue about a fabulous vein of gold just two days north of El Paso del Norte. Because the Indians were starving and the prospects of better times were dim, the padre led them to what is now southern New Mexico, where (the story goes) they found the rich ore. They worked the mine for several years and accumulated a great deal of wealth. Rumors of this mining activity reached Mexico in time, and Spanish officials sent soldiers to find out what had happened to the padre and his followers and – perhaps more importantly – to determine whether the rumors of gold were true. When La Rue heard that the soldiers were on their way, he had the Indians hide the gold and all evidence of the mine.*

Some people believe that Noss found the La Rue hiding place and various members of the Noss family believe that "Doc" found the actual mine there as well. They point to black stains on the limestone which they claim is soot from the smelting operation conducted deep inside the mountain.

How likely is this popular explanation?

First of all, contemporary sources within the Catholic church have found no records of a Padre La Rue. However, in David Chandler's *100 TONS OF GOLD,* a photo purports to show a gold bar with the imprint LA RUE. The Noss family, it is said, furnished the photograph. Second, an assay taken in the 1970s of some of the sandstone in Victorio Peak found that only 1/10th of an ounce of gold was contained in each ton of rock. To obtain 100 tons of gold (as per "Doc's" calculations) from this miniscule concentration would have required the crushing and processing of 32 million tons of rock. That much rock is equal to 600 million cubic feet and would result in a mountain of tailings the size of a two-mile high football field. Where do you suppose the padre hid that mountain? In the San Andres Mountains a tailings pile hundreds of times smaller would stick out like redwood trees in White Sands National Monument.

*Editor's note: Another version of the La Rue story may be found in "The Padre Silver Mine" by Mark T. Bentley, *Password,* XXXVI, 2 (Summer, 1991), 83-84.

Others say that Noss found the plunder seized by Maximilian, the short-lived emperor of Mexico, who was trying to get it out of the country after his dethronement in 1867. There is actually a letter in the missile range files from a man claiming that his grandfather helped Jesse James and Belle Starr steal the mule train of treasure from Maximilian's people and hide it in Victorio Peak.** The purpose of the letter, the man explained, was that he only wanted his fair share. Lately the Noss family has emphasized this story and seems to be distancing itself from the Padre La Rue version. They have a number of artifacts, including a European sword, which supposedly came from the peak. The more current line is that the sword was obviously part of Maximilian's plunder.

"Doc" Noss, c. 1930 (Snapshot from the Ova Noss family)

And there are other stories. One of them reports that the gold came from Germany during World War I and was destined for Pancho Villa to help him suck the United States into war with Mexico. Another combines some of the previous stories with the idea that the peak was the repository for loot taken by Indian raiders in the area. To support this explanation, Gene Ballinger of the Las Cruces *Courier* wrote a long article on August 27, 1992, which said, "Victorio Peak, or Soledad, was a sacred place to the Yaqui, the Comanche and the Apache, and was fought over by all of them and between them. The Yaqui made annual pilgrimages to Soledad Peak and 'deposited' those things of value, taken from their enemies, which they believed would give them strength and power." Ballinger stopped short of spilling

**Editor's note: Clinton P. Hartmann mentions in his *Password* review (Spring, 1989, p. 50) of Patrick Dearen's book *Castle Gap and the Pecos Frontier* that Maximilian's treasure is associated with Castle Gap, a short distance from the Pecos River in Texas.

all the beans when he wrote in the same article, "I wish I could tell you the whole story now, but I cannot. I have given my word and most information is 'off the record'." This "bank" angle is a good one. It is vague enough to cover almost anything that might be found in the peak – from Spanish coins to gold bars to Wells Fargo chests.

For several years, up to and including early 1949, "Doc" Noss formed various partnerships with sundry financial backers in attempts to recover the Victorio Peak treasure. He apparently found it easy to talk people into parting with their money. His treasure story – unlike most such stories where the exact location of the treasure has been lost through the death of the finder – was compellingly different. He could stand on the mountain top and tell prospective investors that the treasure was right under his boots. All they had to do was pay and dig. Locals relate that "Doc" would show these people around and then produce a gold bar as his closer. A convincing piece of evidence, no doubt. However, one oldtimer who claims to have known Noss declares that "Doc" bought copper bars and had them electroplated in El Paso. Others say he may have used brass bars to impress naive investors.

On March 5, 1949, Noss met with Texas oilman Charley Ryan, who (according to some reports) had agreed to purchase some of the gold bars for $25,000. Apparently one or both of the men suspected a double-cross. An argument ensued, and Ryan shot Noss to death. In the words of one writer, "Just twelve years after discovering the treasure, Doc Noss died kneeling in the dust with only $2.16 in his pocket."

During the trial that followed, a great deal of the testimony dealt with "Doc's" reputation and character. He was portrayed as a sometimes violent drunk who carried a gun and was a crack shot. Testimony varied as to what actually happened on the day of the shooting, but Ryan claimed he shot Noss in self-defense. The jury agreed, and Ryan was set free.

A few years before his death, "Doc" had re-married, but after his death it was Ova Noss who laid claim to the treasure story and to the treasure itself. And there is evidence that she sold shares of stock in an attempt to finance work at the peak. Her efforts were short-lived, however, for in the early 1950s she was forced off the land when the missile range extended its western boundary to encompass all of the San Andres Mountain Range.

The search for the reputed treasure of Victorio Peak did not end with the death of "Doc" Noss or with the expulsion of Ova Noss from the property. It has continued into the present with increasing fervor. Although the region around the peak has been used for decades by the Air Force as a gunnery range, fortune hunters have trespassed, the military being no exception. In 1961, a captain named Leonard V. Fiege of nearby Holloman Air Force Base filed an affidavit in which he claimed that in 1958 he and an airman-companion had discovered a tunnel leading into the peak. On exploring it, they found a stack of several hundred gold bars, but had left them on site for fear of jeopardizing their military careers. Fiege and a group of financial backers, including the commander of Holloman, petitioned White Sands for permission to go in and retrieve the gold. The request was initially denied, but on appeal to the United States Treasury Department and the Secretary of the Army, permission was granted. From August 5 through August 9, 1962, Fiege and his partners, under the watchful eye of Army security and the Secret Service, searched in vain for the tunnel which he and his companion had carefully concealed in 1958. They were given an extension in late September and worked periodically through the first of November. At this point, the work was stopped because Ova Noss protested that the Army was stealing her gold.

In 1963 another search was approved by the Army. This expedition was sponsored by the Museum of New Mexico, a state agency, which contracted with the Gaddis Mining company of Denver (later established to be working with members of the Ova Noss family) to dig for the treasure. During its sixty days on the peak, the company carved roads and built platforms all over the mountain, drilled eighty bore holes looking for a cavern, and drove a 200-foot tunnel in an attempt to intercept Noss' original shaft below the collapsed area. The company reportedly spent $250,000 in the effort and found nothing.

A decade later, Victorio Peak gained national attention. In 1973 Jack Anderson reported in his syndicated column the story of noted attorney F. Lee Bailey's representation of a group seeking to recover a gold treasure at White Sands Missile Range. According to Bailey, the group knew the exact location of 292 gold bars, each weighing about eighty pounds. Bailey was having trouble gaining access to the site and talked to Attorney General John Mitchell about the problem. Mitchell related the story to White House aide John Dean, who then mentioned it in his Senate Watergate testimony. At this point head-

The ravaged west side of Victorio Peak in 1963 during the Gaddis Mining Company search for the treasure cavern. The roads were carved on the peak to establish a number of platforms for a drilling rig which was used to bore holes in an attempt to intercept the cavern. Just above the trucks and bulldozer in the photo is the opening to a tunnel that the company dug into the peak. (White Sands Missile Range photo)

lines announced a link between Watergate and a fabulous treasure. Articles retelling the Noss story and all the associated legends soon appeared throughout the country.

A kind of gold fever or hysteria developed around the story in the press. The value of the treasure started growing, nourished by TV exposure, newsprint, and hot air. Eventually it was reported to be worth $225 billion. That's right, 225 BILLION! The *Washington Post* came to the rescue and pointed out that Fort Knox stored only 6.2 billion dollars in gold reserves. In August, 1973, the *Albuquerque Tribune* carried a series of articles by Howard Bryan, reprinted in the *El Paso Herald-Post,* which recounted the complicated story of Victorio Peak and its purported hidden treasure.

In 1974 various claimants appeared saying the gold at Victorio Peak was rightfully theirs. The claimants included both Ova Noss and Violet Noss ("Doc's" second wife), as well as former Noss partners and others who said they had in some way stumbled onto the treasure. The state of New Mexico even sued the Army in an attempt to gain access to the peak for one of the groups which had promised the state a cut. By 1976 most of the claimants were organized by Norman Scott, owner of Expeditions Unlimited of Pompano Beach, Florida; and the Army granted Scott permission to enter White Sands to retrieve the gold. It was "put up or shut up time" for most of the claimants, since some, like F. Lee Bailey, had previously stated they needed only a few hours to get the gold. Named "Operation Goldfinder," the expedition was launched on March 19, 1977, and lasted through March 28. Representatives from the *New York Times, Washington Post,* London *Daily Mail, Time, Rolling Stone, National Enquirer,* "60 Minutes," and dozens of local and regional outlets covered the anticipated bonanza. Nothing was found.

After 1977, the Army refused entry to Victorio Peak to all gold searchers. But in 1989 the Ova Noss Family Partnership, headed by Terry Delonas, a grandson of Ova, requested permission to make a long-term, final search of the area. The request was granted with two conditions: (1) that the work be done on a non-interference basis and (2) that the Army be reimbursed for expenses in support of the operation. The Partnership agreed to the conditions, and the first check to cover support costs was delivered in January, 1991. The license which formally set down the conditions for the search was signed on April 4, 1991. It stated that the search would take place between May 15, 1991, and May 14, 1992.

Paragraph 12 of the document states that "All archeological resources, antiquities or items of historical or cultural interest . . . whenever located on WSMR shall remain the property of the Government." It then lists objects that are considered artifacts (such as mortars, baskets, pottery, rock carvings, arrowheads, jewelry, and even "all portions of shipwrecks" – surely an unnecessary entry in the case of Victorio Peak). The paragraph goes on to define "treasure" as "coins, gold or silver bullion, precious metals (not including radioactive metals), precious cut and uncut gems (not including jewelry or gems set in valuable ornaments), unset and loose jewels, and related valuables." If a treasure is found, the document stipulates, the Partnership will cease operations and with the representatives of WSMR make a written and photographic inventory, artifacts will be disposed of according to Federal laws, and the treasure will be removed and stored in a bank vault. Finally, the Department of Justice will go to the United States District Court for New Mexico and request a determination as to the ownership of the treasure.

After all the preparatory work, which included computer modelling, radar and photographic imaging of the peak, and an environmental assessment, the search did not finish during the given year. In fact, it never started. Because of a number of delays, the Family Partnership requested an extension to the original license. The request was granted, and the group was given an additional year to run – from May 15, 1992, through May 14, 1993. The search actually started on July 20, 1992.

The Partnership's announced high-tech plan involved drilling several holes into the peak as deep as 400 feet. The idea was to break into a large cavern which their ground radar and computer imaging told them was located under the north side of the peak. They were then going to lower a specially-designed $100,000 probe into each hole. The probe is equipped with lights, a small video camera which feeds live signals to the surface, a range-finder, and digital compass. If they were lucky, they were supposed to confirm the existence of the cavern and possibly find easy access to it. If they were really lucky, they would turn on the camera and see a stack of gold bars.

In the fall, they drilled a dozen holes into the peak and never hit the anticipated cavern. And they never lowered the expensive camera into any of the holes. Assessing the situation, the group changed its strategy. They abandoned most of the high-tech methods they had counted on and started a more direct approach.

What "Doc" Noss entered in 1937 is nothing more than a crack in the limestone and coral cap on Victorio Peak. This crack runs clean through the peak from east to west but is plugged in many places with debris. Supposedly "Doc" worked his way between and around these various plugs to get to some other tunnel or crack which led him to the treasure room. The dynamite blast in 1939 apparently loosened a wall of debris and sent it down on top of Doc's route.

The Partnership's "simple" solution has been to clean all the debris out of the crack and find "Doc's" original access. They hired a device called the "guzzler," which acts like a huge vacuum cleaner and is capable of sucking out rocks the size of bricks. With it they can clean out several cubic yards of debris every day.

In this operation, which uses mostly volunteers from all over the country, they have found some of Noss' mining buckets, tools, 1930's cigarette packs and a piece of weathered wood with the letter "T" and a star carved into it. According to family members the letter and star stand for "Tom Star," an alias often used by "Doc" Noss. They also said the board was positioned to act as a pointer, and this find gave them confidence that they were headed in the right direction.

Ova Noss on the side of Victorio Peak during a 1979 photo session held a few months before her death in January, 1980. (Photo by Jim Eckles)

The Partnership dug diligently through the spring and early summer removing tons of debris. Yes, the license was scheduled to expire on May 14, 1993, but White Sands extended it for another year at the request of the Partnership.

At the end of June, the Partnership seemed to be losing a little steam. They had cleaned out most of the crack – down to the next layer, which is shale – and had found nothing. There was no crack or tunnel leading to the north or south which "Doc" could have used to get to the alleged treasure cavern.

So they took a two-month vacation to give everyone a rest, to beat the mid-summer heat and plan their next assault on the peak. They left saying they would be back in September and would expand the search. They will continue to clean out the crack but will also use a drilling rig to try to access a number of other tunnels they claim run all through the peak.

Also, they will search for small stashes of gold around the peak. Supposedly, one Tony Jolley helped Noss bury 100 bars of gold the night before Noss was killed. Jolley says he later came and dug up ten bars which he sold for $60,000. The Partnership wants to find the rest of them and possibly other hiding places, such as the Fiege cache.

The search continues. The question for White Sands is whether it will ever end. Other stories of alleged gold caches have materialized in the past year. In fact, it appears there were a number of people running around losing treasure troves in this area. It seems terribly careless of them.

JIM ECKLES, a resident of Las Cruces, is the civilian public affairs officer at White Sands Missile Range.

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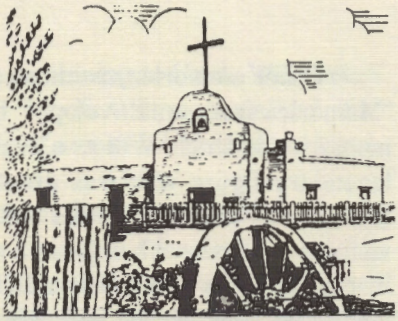


•HISTORICAL MEMORIES CONTEST•
1992

Uncle Will

Memories from an Envelope

by Carolyn Bridgers Tanner

Editor's note: Presented below is the essay which won first prize in the 1992 Historical Memories Contest. This Contest, sponsored annually by the El Paso County Historical Society, is open to seniors fifty-five years of age and up. It offers two cash prizes: $200 for first place and $100 for second place.

Kathleen Gilliland, *the director of the 1992 Contest, will also direct the 1993 Contest. She has set December 15, 1993, as the deadline for submission of manuscripts, to be addressed to her at 7735 Rosedale, El Paso, Texas 79935. The essays may be handwritten or typewritten (preferably double-spaced) and should not exceed 1500 words or so.*

Almost fifty years ago, I left El Paso to live elsewhere. Still clear in my memory are the alligators in the Plaza, my beloved Mount Franklin and its Scenie Drive, the dreaded spring sandstorms, the sudden late-summer cloudbursts which turned our street into a torrent of water that ran off the mountainside, and the fun of walking across the bridge for a meal at Dominguez Cafe in Juarez ($1.50 for a full filet mignon dinner). These are memories of a kind.

Other memories are those of Uncle Will. These I think of as my "Memories from an Envelope." Because to tell the truth, I have few memories of Uncle Will as a real person. I remember him more as a legendary figure who was greatly respected by my parents for his "fine work" and "public service." I dimly remember his occasional visits to our house when I was a small child. And I remember a period in the late '30s when we hadn't heard from him in a long time. I wondered why, for he was my father's older brother and our only relative in El Paso. When I asked my father what had happened to Uncle Will, he explained, "Uncle Will has gone back to Austin to help make the laws for our state of Texas."

Uncle Will had been a representative from the El Paso district to the Texas Legislature in the early years of this century. He had then held a number of public offices in El Paso County for some thirty years and had returned to the Legislature in 1936. His name was W. W. Bridgers.

About the time that I was ready to enter the College of Mines, my father told me that Uncle Will had worked ("a long time ago, before you were born") to introduce a bill in the Legislature that would locate a school of mining engineering in El Paso. Uncle Will had not been successful in that effort. But my father insisted that Uncle Will's work ("down in Austin, back in '02 or '03") had been a necessary initial step in the eventual establishment of the Texas School of Mines and Metallurgy at El Paso in 1914.

I felt a vague sense of pride in this knowledge, and occasionally during the next four years (when I wasn't thinking about boys, dances, and football games), I would think of Uncle Will as I made my way from class to class along the rocky paths of the little campus up there on the hill (its name having changed by then to Texas College of Mines and Metallurgy). And once in a while, maybe after a stimulating class with Dr. Zimmerman or Dr. Porter,* I would realize that I was getting a good education and that Uncle Will, in a sort of way, had helped to make this opportunity possible for people like me who couldn't afford to go away to college.

Several years later, after my father's death, I found among his things a big envelope labeled "Will Bridgers." Inside were a number of

*Editor's note: Dr. Isabel Zimmerman was a longtime member of the English department, and Dr. Eugene O. Porter was a member of the history department. In 1956 Dr. Porter, under the auspices of The El Paso County Historical Society, became the founding editor of *Password*.

newspaper clippings and other papers pertaining to Uncle Will. I read them all carefully. And – finally – Uncle Will materialized into something more than a vague memory of a colorful, straight-talking, short little man who had visited us once in a while.

The first clipping I studied was from the *El Paso Herald-Post* of October 16, 1946. It was dominated by a picture of Uncle Will and this headline: "Private Rites Will Be Held Thursday for W. W. Bridgers." The long article under the headline refreshed my memory as to the circumstances that had brought the Bridgers family to El Paso. It stated that W. W. Bridgers had been born in Montgomery County, Texas, on November 6, 1869, and had arrived in El Paso as a water carrier for the Texas & Pacific Railroad in 1881 on his twelfth birthday. It further related that his widowed mother, Melissa Caroline Bridgers, and his two younger brothers, Sam H. (named for Sam Houston) and Leigh T. (who would become my father), soon joined him to make their home in El Paso and that Mrs. Bridgers (my grandmother) "built the fourth house north of the railroad tracks at 602 North Oregon street in 1882."

This article and several others in the big envelope gave me a pretty good picture of Uncle Will's early working life and his later career as a public servant. "As a youth," said one of the clippings, "Mr. Bridgers was a Western Union messenger, learned the printing trade and became foreman for the old Herald." In 1898 "he was elected to his first office – justice of the peace." Then he began to study law and was admitted to the bar. "He was elected to the Legislature in 1900, 1902, and 1904 when the El Paso district extended to Eagle Pass. In 1906 he was elected county attorney for four years, and in 1912 was elected district attorney." Another article in the envelope reported that "Mr. Bridgers did not return to the State Legislature until 1936." And it went on to tell about his work as a legislator, both in the early career (1900-1906) and the later (1936 to the time of his death on October 15, 1946). "In his early legislative days," said the newspaper article, "he supported such measures as he deemed favorable to his West Texas constituency. One of these was a bill protecting quail, which were considered enemies of the boll-weevil." The article also stated that he "generally supported progressive social and labor legislation, . . . old-age pension proposals, favored a state clean politics act . . . and re-districting proposals." The last paragraph consisted of a long quotation by State Representative S. J. Isaacks, ending with these words: "El Paso County . . . never had a representative who was more

loyal to the people's interest nor more conscientious to the discharge of his duty than [W. W. Bridgers]. . . . Personally I have lost a friend and a colleague . . . whose judgment and counsel were invaluable."

The envelope also contained a very legal-looking document attached to a sturdy blue backing and adorned with the gold seal of Texas edged in blue ribbon. Headed "H. S. R. No. 97," this document is dated February 25, 1947, and it is signed by the Speaker of the House and all the other members of the Texas Legislature. It begins with a number of "WHEREAS" clauses (for example, "WHEREAS, Mr. Bridgers served in the House of Representatives of the Texas Legislature with great distinction for fifteen years, during which term of office his wisdom had a deep and profound influence upon the outcome of many decisions regarding State policy" and "WHEREAS, Mr. Bridgers, during a long life of untiring and devoted service to his State and community, gave generously of his worldly goods, his time, energy, and sympathy to all worthy persons and causes. . . .") These suspended clauses all lead to "RESOLVED by the House of Representatives of the State of Texas, That this be our expression of sympathy . . . and that we will keep the memory of his good deeds and splendid service . . . forever in our hearts."

Also among the papers in the "Will Bridgers" envelope was a little magazine called *The Sirocco.* It is dated June, 1938, and is described as "The house magazine of the McMath Printing Company." On its cover is a picture of Uncle Will, and the issue features an essay titled "W. W. (Billy) Bridgers." The author, W. S. McMath, refers to his subject as "an El Paso institution, like Mt. Franklin or the Rio Grande." Apparently Mr. McMath was not exaggerating, for one of the newspaper articles in the envelope described Uncle Will as "a dean among old-time El Pasoans, frequently being consulted by those writing of the roaring 80s or looking for authoritative information on

A photo of **W. W. Bridgers** *copied by James W. Ward from the cover of the June 1938 issue of* The Sirocco. *(Magazine, courtesy Carolyn Bridgers Tanner)*

early El Paso days." Another of the clippings was devoted to "Billy" Bridgers as "a pioneer El Pasoan who knew the city first hand." "When he first arrived in El Paso," said the writer, "the village had little to recommend it. The only lights visible at night were the lights from the kerosene lamps gleaming from the saloons."

Here in print were reminders of how Uncle Will loved to talk about the "early days" in El Paso when "the Overland stagecoach station was still in existence at Overland and El Paso streets," when "San Francisco Street was the business district," when "Two thirds of the population carried guns," and when he played the cornet in "the old McGinty Club Band, a locally famous social club of the Gay Nineties."** This article also stated that "For years, Billy Bridgers had insisted that he was the only living witness to the shooting of Dallas Stoudenmire in a brawl. . . ."

Reading on, I learned that Uncle Will didn't confine himself to merely talking about old El Paso. He also wrote extensively on the subject. According to the McMath essay in *The Sirocco* of June, 1938, Uncle Will's column "Just Chatting" had appeared regularly in "the old *World News*" and was "one of the bright spots of that paper." And an article by *El Paso Times* editor W. J. Hooten, written two days after Uncle Will's death, told me that Uncle Will later wrote a column for the *El Paso Times* from about 1939 until shortly before his death. The column, as Hooten went on to explain, had started with a letter to a *Times* staff member from Representative Bridgers describing "what was going on in Austin." The letter was "so interesting that it was published." Upon request, another letter followed . . . and then another – which led to a weekly column devoted to assorted topics (including, frequently, the author's remembrances of "old El Paso.")

My journey through the "Will Bridgers" envelope brought me at last to a small clipping, undated and unidentified. It was obviously the final paragraph of a chatty column whose author lamented the passing of "Billy" Bridgers and closed with these words: "What in the world are we going to do from now on when we want some first-hand information about early El Paso? We can consult the library or the newspaper files, but that will not be like talking to oldtimers in person."

**Editor's note: "Billy" Bridgers also played a stringed instrument and was a member of the McGinty String Orchestra in the 1890s. A photo of that group which appeared in the Spring 1993 *Password* (on Page 45) shows him seated on the front row, fourth from the left.

He was indeed very much of a person, my Uncle Will ("Billy" to his colleagues and friends). I deeply regret that I didn't know him well, but I treasure my "Memories from an Envelope." And – like those representatives in the 1947 Texas Legislature – I am RESOLVED to "keep the memory of his good deeds and splendid service" forever in my heart.

CAROLYN BRIDGERS TANNER, a native of El Paso and a graduate of Texas College of Mines and Metallurgy (now The University of Texas at El Paso), resides in Saratoga, California. She visits El Paso frequently and is a long-time member of the El Paso County Historical Society.

Bloom Southwest Jewish Archives

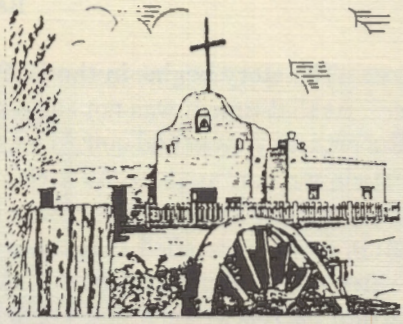
continued from page 122

There are families in Arizona, New Mexico and Texas where no pork is eaten in the homes. Dramatic stories are coming from Hispanic families in Colorado and California as well. While primary research of the so-called crypto-Jews started in Texas and was pursued with scholarly work in New Mexico, the study is a major part of the work of the Bloom Archives. Writers for national magazines come to the archives to research these mystical stories; recently a producer for Israeli television came to Tucson to film the story.

And so the Bloom Southwest Jewish Archives now has two main areas of research – the pioneer Jewish history of Arizona, New Mexico and West Texas and the dramatic and rapidly growing files of stories of the hidden Jews of the Southwest. Finally, the archives also houses a photo collection.

The Bloom Southwest Jewish Archives is not a museum; it is a research center designed to serve those interested in the history of Jews who have had a presence, hidden or open, in the American Southwest for almost half a millenium.

ABRAHAM S. CHANIN is director and Research Professor at the Bloom Southwest Archives. He has been a member of the University of Arizona faculty of Journalism, and before that he was a journalist in Arizona for more than forty years. He has authored three books on Southwest history, including *This Land, These Voices.*



The Bottling Industries of Early El Paso

by Barbara J. Angus and René Harris

In the early months of 1993, the El Paso Museum of History hosted an exhibit called "Bottled in El Paso." The exhibit was so named because it featured an assortment of glass containers for various beverages that had been produced and bottled in El Paso. Many of the exhibited bottles had been found in an El Paso City dump located in the Chamizal area;[1] others were donated by private collectors.

According to the research done by your authors in preparation for the exhibit, the bottles on display presented graphic evidence of several important industries that flourished in El Paso for some seventy years and more – from the early 1880s until the mid-1950s. All together, these bottles "poured out" an interesting story about the growth and development of El Paso and about the needs, tastes, and predilections of its citizens during those seventy-something years.

It is known, of course, that the El Paso Valley area was a center of beverage production and distribution in the days of the mission grape and "Pass" brandy. Not so well known, perhaps, are the circumstances which later inspired and popularized local breweries, soft-drink manufacturers, and dairies.

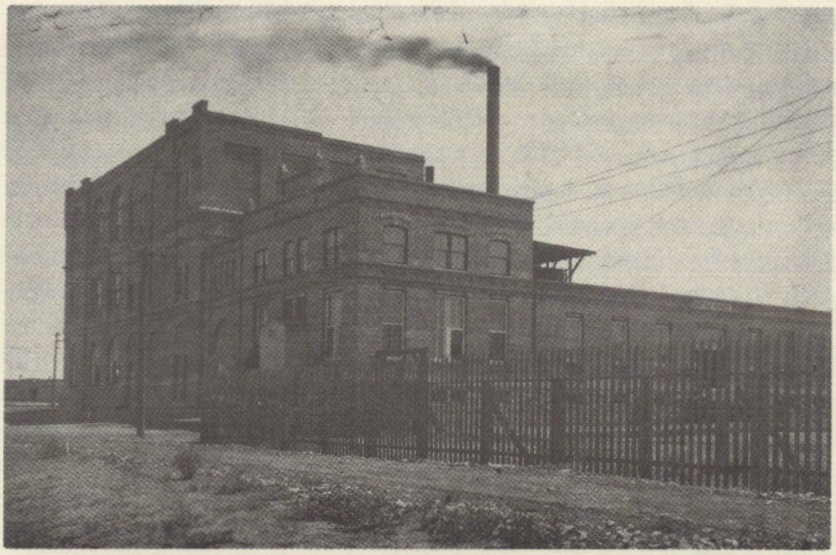
The story begins in the El Paso of the immediate post-railroad era. At that time it was not easy to obtain "safe" drinking water. Mrs. Robert Lee Howze had quite a lot to say on that subject in a *Password* article written in 1958. As a child, she had lived at Fort Bliss from 1884 to 1886 (when the fort was located along the river near Hart's Mill), and she recalled that the water at the fort "was supplied by a water wagon which sucked the water up from the river and delivered it into barrels at each house." She added that the water was "liquid mud and had to be settled and dipped into other barrels." And she went on to remark that her mother, "being particular, had our drinking water settled twice."[2]

The El Paso Water Company had been organized in 1881 to solve these problems, but the Company was dependent on river water. Little wonder, then, that those citizens who could pay the price used water brought from Deming in tank cars.[3]

Into this world of an "iffy" water supply stepped a couple of soda pop manufacturers. By 1881, W. Coffin & Co. was advertising in an El Paso newspaper that it had a "complete outfit for manufacturing Mineral Waters, Ginger Ale, Sarsaparilla, Lemon & Selzer" and that "Orders in the City and along the line of the RR will receive prompt attention." The only bottler listed in the earliest El Paso City Directory (1885) was the firm of Houck and Dieter, wholesale liquor dealers which also manufactured "all kinds" of mineral waters, ginger ale, soda, champagne cider, and ice as a service to their saloon customers.

The ice business must have been brisk, for there were plenty of saloons in the El Paso of the 1880s and '90s, to say nothing of dance halls and "gentlemen's clubs." Until the end of the century or thereabouts, all alcoholic beverages sold at these establishments were imported – either from Juárez/El Paso del Norte or from cities in the United States. In 1898 the local liquor dealers formed the El Paso Brewing Association, and sometime between 1898 and 1903 this Association built a brewery at what is now Frutas and Latta Streets. This brewery originally produced 11,000 barrels of beer a year, with "Golden Pride" being the standard product and "Southern Bud" its bottled beer.[4]

Whatever the characteristics needed for a good brewery or soda manufactory, they seemed to stay with the business site. El Paso is replete with instances of bottlers closing shop, only to be replaced by similar organizations. For example, R. F. Johnson and Company is listed in the 1896-1897 City Directory as a manufacturer of mineral



A picture postcard showing the El Paso Brewing Association building shortly after its opening, c. 1903. (Postcard courtesy Winifred McVey Middagh)

waters. By 1900 this firm's office and factory had been taken over by Henry Pfaff, a wholesale liquor dealer and soda manufacturer. Pfaff, in turn, was replaced by Southwestern Liquor Company in 1908. Another address, 520 Park, was home in succession to the National Bottling Works, the Texas Bottling Works, and a bottler named Francisco Gonzalez.

Until well into the twentieth century, the soda pop business in El Paso was handled by liquor dealers, such as Houck and Dieter, Pfaff, and others. But in 1906, Lawrence Gardner, an independent entrepreneur, established Purity Bottling and Manufacturing Company, and he later claimed that he was the one who broke the liquor dealers' hold on the soda business. He persuaded youngsters all around town to set up soft drink stands, and soon the demand for soda pop overtaxed the plant that he and his wife operated. Purity moved several times, and in 1912 it consolidated with the soda manufacturing arm of Houck and Dieter to become the Empire Bottling Works.[5] The new Empire bottle was even made in the same distinctive mold used by Purity's previous competitor and now-partner.

Two other soft drink firms got their start between 1906 and 1908. The Woodlawn Bottling Company, called after a neighborhood

park, was established by Martin Sweeney.[6] Its soft drinks were bottled under the names "Woodlawn" and "Toltec" – the latter perhaps a reference to a longtime El Paso club for gentlemen. (The Toltec Building still stands across the street from the Social Security Building in downtown El Paso.) The Magnolia Bottling Company was managed by Hope M. Smith, and it produced orange, lemon, and lime crush under the brand name "Hope's."[7] In 1912, Mr. Smith obtained a franchise for bottling Coca-Cola in El Paso, and his firm became a one-product manufacturer.[8] In the 1920s, Magnolia Coca-Cola received an award five years in a row for making the best Coca-Cola in the United States. At the end of that period, Hope Smith was made a member of the "Knights of the Golden Bottle."[9]

The number of soda pop manufacturers in El Paso steadily increased during the Mexican Revolution – perhaps in response to the large number of refugees from Mexico and to the National Guard units being stationed in the area – and reached a peak after World War I and the start of Prohibition. El Paso's border location was reflected in names such as Border Beverage Company, International Bottling Works, and La Mexicana (Mexican Bottling Works), while the theme of regional and national patriotism appeared in bottling companies called Lone Star, Texas, National, Union, and Victory.

The El Paso Brewing Association also had an expanding market – until Prohibition hit in 1919. The Association tried making near-beer for a year or two, as well as its own brand of soda pop, but then moved most of the equipment to Juárez, where it was used in the Juárez Brewery. The El Paso building was occupied by Fire Company No. 5 for a brief period, but ironically fire eventually gutted the top floors of the building.[10]

At the end of Prohibition, in 1934, Harry Mitchell rebuilt and expanded the El Paso Brewery. Its Chief Engineer was Samuel C. McVey, who had worked at the old brewery and then, during the early Prohibition years, as Chief Engineer at the Juárez Brewery until he took an early retirement. His services at the refurbished brewery in El Paso were considered indispensable, not only because of his expertise, but also because he "knew where everything used to be" in the original plant.[11] The new brewery employed thirty-five people, plus an additional sales force, and hired out all construction work to local contractors.[12] The entire operation was a great boost to the El Paso economy, which, along with the rest of the United States, was in the depths of the Great Depression.

"Harry Mitchell's Special" and other related products were brewed until the 1950s. Mitchell had bought out his partner in 1945, and then in 1951 he sold the firm to Charles Kuper, who retained the company name. In 1956 the Falstaff Brewing Company of St. Louis took over, operating the brewery until 1967. The building, of solid concrete construction, is currently used for apartments and offices.[13]

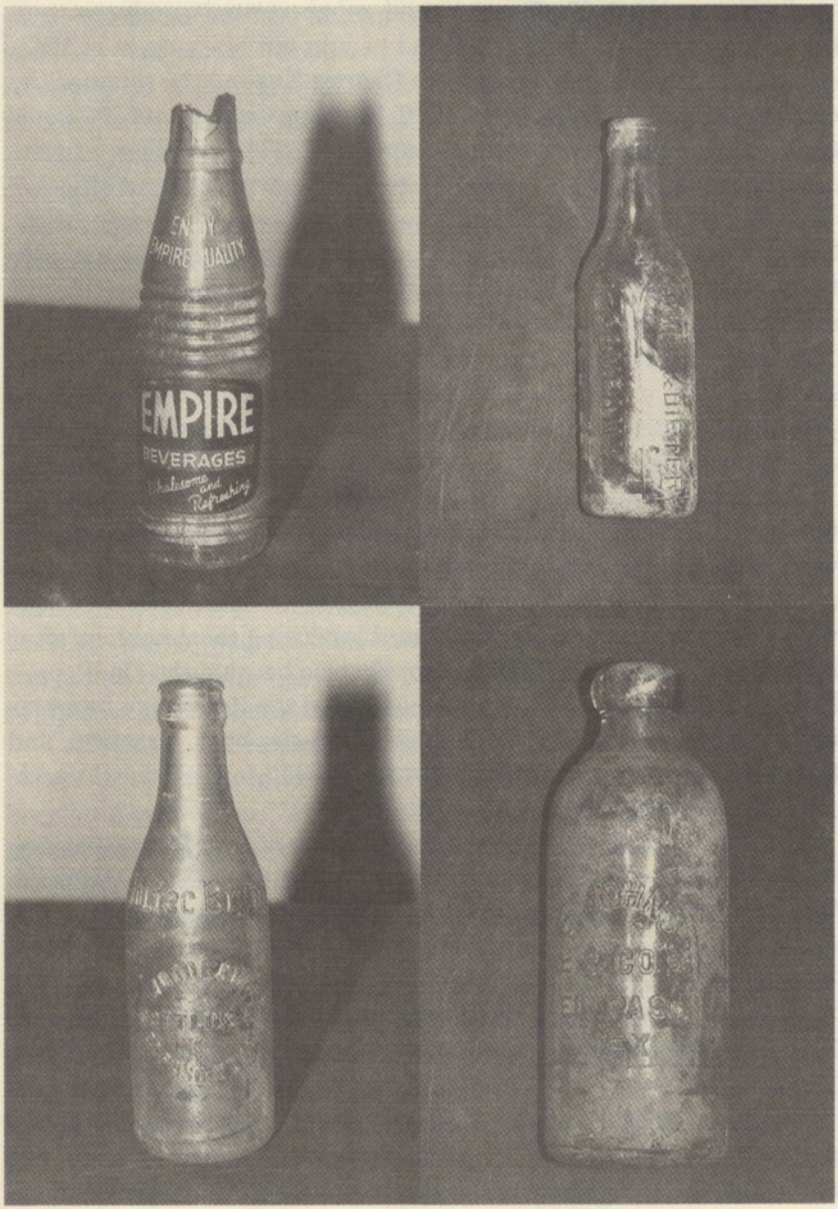
During the late 1920s and the 1930s, Empire was one of the largest firms in the United States devoted to the soft drink and confectionary business. It produced several flavors of "Empire" soft drinks – "Old Monk," a grape drink; two kinds of ginger ale, and "Bronco," a fruit cordial with oriental spices. It also bottled Dr. Pepper from 1931 until 1949. The factory was equipped with a bottling plant, a laboratory, a candy factory, and sales rooms for soda fountain and confectioner's equipment.[14] The firm operated until 1956.

National brands of soda pop came creeping into El Paso toward the end of the Depression. At first, established local manufacturers would undertake a franchise at the same time they continued producing their own brands. Magnolia, as mentioned earlier, had started with its own "Hope's" sodas, but ceased producing them not long after it obtained the Coca-Cola franchise. Empire became the Dr. Pepper bottler in El Paso, and Woodlawn controlled the Pepsi-Cola interests in town. Nehi, Royal Crown, Nesbitt, Whistle, Vess, Grapette, and Seven-Up were other familiar names in the El Paso of the late Depression and World War II years.

It is hard to determine the age of many of the El Paso bottling works because they changed and reorganized frequently. Magnolia, Woodlawn, and Empire appear to hold the longevity record of the soft drink business, but a relative "dark horse," the Nicholson Bottling Works, is right up there. Nicholson operated in the rear of 1024 Wyoming from 1920 until 1979 – just shy of sixty years. The three inhabitants of the brewery – the El Paso Brewing Association, Harry Mitchell, and Falstaff – put together don't equal that.

The number of soft drink bottlers peaked in El Paso during the mid-1950s, with fourteen listed in the City Directory. Today, the earliest of the franchises, according to the El Paso telephone directory, is the only one still with us – Magnolia Coca-Cola.

Beer and soft drinks were not the only beverages produced and bottled in El Paso during the some seven decades under discussion. Also – and very importantly – there were the milk-bottlers. The City



Four of the soda pop bottles displayed at the "Bottled in El Paso" exhibit. Clockwise from top left, the bottles respectively of Empire Bottling Works, Houck and Dieter, Woodlawn Bottling Company (for its drink called "Toltec"), and R. F. Johnson and Company. (Photos by James W. Ward)

Directories list five dairies in operation as early as 1892. The abrupt leap from no dairies listed in the earlier City Directories to five in 1892 reflects, perhaps, El Paso's rapid transformation from a rural village, whose individual citizens kept cows and goats, to the bustling citified community that emerged in the wake of the railroads. Suddenly El Paso was peopled principally with "immigrants" who had to depend on specialists for their dairy supplies.

In the early 1900s, milk was delivered daily by horse-drawn wagons. The horses had their routes so well memorized that "A new man and an old horse will get a milk route delivered far faster than an old man and a new horse," according to David E. Price as quoted in an undated local newspaper clipping found at the El Paso Museum of History. Milk was delivered in quart, pint, and half-pint glass bottles. Empties were collected with the following delivery, and were washed and sterilized before being refilled. Dairies such as Lone Star, Wholesome, El Paso, and American had their names embossed on their bottles. Even La Tuna Prison, which opened in 1932, had its own marked bottles – Federal Prison Industries, Inc. La Tuna, Texas.

One of the earliest local dairies is still in business, Price's Creameries. It was established in 1906 by Mary Smith Price, a widow with five sons and two cows. The oldest son milked the cows, and the second son delivered it to the neighbors. At the beginning, there were eleven customers and one route.[15] By 1917, Price's oldest wholesale route had two particularly good customers. The Coney Island and Gem Saloons each had standing orders for twenty-five gallons of buttermilk a day. Apparently, buttermilk was an accepted tonic for hangovers. The saloons were the biggest customers for that beverage, cashing in on the cure for the morning-after-the-night-before.[16]

The 1920s saw a boom in local dairies, many of which were located on Alameda and on North Loop. One of the new dairies, founded in 1923, was the Life Saver Goat Dairy. Later, Mr. and Mrs. Lazar Kopilowitz added milk cows, and the business was renamed Wholesome Dairy, Inc.[17] Farmer's Dairies began operation during this decade, under the direction of Adalberto Navar,[18] and is still in operation. In 1927 a cooperative organization of Upper and Mesilla Valley dairy farmers was formed. Called Elephant Butte Dairy League, the members of this cooperative were shipping a daily average of 7,100 gallons of milk to El Paso.[19] In 1929 Price's Dairy, Desert Gold Dairies, Velvet Ice Cream, and J.R.B. Ice Cream Company combined to form Midwest Dairies, Inc. However, each plant ex-

cept the J.R.B. continued to operate under its own name. Midwest also had plants in Hatch, Las Cruces, Portales, and Roswell.[20] A new plant opened on North Piedras in El Paso in 1933, and is still in business as Price's. At one time, the El Paso unit of Price's was the largest milking barn in the world.[21] Borden Company entered the El Paso market in 1929 when it acquired Mistletoe Creameries, a local concern. It opened a $130,000 "lactarium" and established the Golden Crest Farm way out from town on what was then called Mesa Mountain Road (now Mesa Street). The site, located roughly near one of the present Coronado shopping areas, also featured a fully equipped children's playground and comfort facilities to encourage tourism.[22]

Dairy farming and its accompanying bottling industry had become a prosperous enterprise in the El Paso of those decades immediately preceding the mid-twentieth century. Undoubtedly, the warm, dry weather and the abundance of locally-grown alfalfa for feed were important factors in the development of an industry which had begun humbly as one- or two-cow operations in the valley and a few horse-drawn milk wagons.

In addition to soda pop bottles, beer bottles, and milk bottles, the "Bottled in El Paso" exhibit at the Museum of History also included a number of medicine bottles. A few of these bottles had once held locally-produced medicines. Whether these medicines had actually been bottled by their respective producers cannot be determined, but the probability is that they were. This industry was in no way comparable to the beverage-bottling industries which had contributed so significantly to the El Paso economy during what might be called the city's "growing-up" years, but the enterprise nevertheless deserved representation in the exhibit. And it deserves mention here.

The City Directories of 1906 and 1907 list a firm called Dr. Thatcher's Veterinary Medicine, and it may be assumed that this firm made and perhaps bottled its medicine. Then, several years go by with no listings of any medicine or "remedy" producers. But in the Directories of the 1920s and '30s, a number of entries appear: G. H. Rider, the Brazilian Remedy Company, Gordon Treatment Company, Mammy's Remedy Company, Macedonio Pinon, Lester-Harry Products, Little Bear Chemical Company, Romero Drug Company, Eugenio Davalos, Franklin OM Serum Company, and Kln-Aid Laboratories, Inc. Grayson Drug Company produced Gradco Antiseptic and Anti Hay Fever, and the El Paso Pharmacal Company produced San

Lorenzo Brand Yerbasal, "un laxante herbario." Chinese physicians and medicines are represented in these City Directories by the Dr. Che Hok Chinese Herb Company and Lai & Tong.

Fortunately for collectors and historians, glass, while easily broken, does not decompose like organic materials. Its widespread use in times past as containers for popular drinks and medicines make it, therefore, a frequent "find" at historical sites, providing researchers with clues to local business history, trade networks, and consumer tastes. The El Paso area has been rich in such "finds," and the Museum of History was pleased to exhibit a variety of bottles that reveal an important segment of El Paso's early business vigor and growth.

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NELLIE CASHMAN Prospector and Trailblazer by Suzann Ledbetter. El Paso: Texas Western Press, 1993

A delight. A romp. A giant killer.

This 63-page addition to the Southwestern Studies Series from Texas Western Press deserves and will receive more accolades. It has one major fault: much too short.

Born about 1850, Nellie Cashman emigrated from Ireland to Boston with her mother, Frances, and her sister, Fanny, about ten years later. Reaching maturity, Fanny and Nellie took menial jobs (including bellhopping!), then, in 1869, ventured west by train to San Francisco. Fanny married within a few months, but Nellie "hadn't left her beloved Ireland and traveled halfway around the world just to snare a husband and keep house." Instead, she combined her considerable talents for cooking with her real passion, prospecting for gold.

Throughout the rest of her life, Nellie Cashman traded her frying pan for a gold pan back and forth as geography and circumstances dictated. She demonstrated incredible bravery while enduring horrendous physical hardships from Nevada to Canada's bitterly cold Cassiar wilderness, to Tucson and Tombstone, to Mexico, and even to South Africa.

Wherever she went, Nellie found gold mines not only in the ground but in her general stores and restaurants or boarding houses. In Tombstone, in 1880, her store boasted "boots, shoes, hosiery and ladies' wear, and a specialty of gentlemen's furnishing goods," while her cosmopolitan Russ House restaurant featured a kitchen with "no cockroaches . . . and the flour is clean." A Sunday menu offered "Breast of lamb, breaded a la Mayonnaise; Chicken Fricasse a la Creme, and Lobster," and other delights, at fifty cents.

Nellie's flamboyant character did not overshadow her genuine compassion for others, including her sister's orphaned children. She was rewarded with "modest wealth," a nephew wrote, "but she was constantly giving it away to the poor and needy and to various projects of her church."

At 74, in 1924, Nellie Cashman achieved a modicum of fame when she rode 750 miles in seventeen days by dog sled. Later that year she caught pneumonia after a visit to the east coast and died on January 4, 1925, in a Fairbanks hospital.

Nellie Cashman is virtually unknown today, but we hope some wise institution will follow through on author Ledbetter's suggestion: "Perhaps one day Alaska, Arizona, or British Columbia will erect a monument honoring the bonny Irish immigrant whose pioneering spirit, like her generosity and courage, seemed inexhaustible."

Bravo Nellie. Bravo Suzann Ledbetter. Bravo Texas Western Press.

BEA BRAGG
Freelance Writer, Albuquerque

THE FRONTIER WORLD OF FORT GRIFFIN by Charles Robinson III. Spokane: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 1992, $27.50

In September, 1867, Fort Griffin was established on the Clear Fork of the Brazos River about fifty miles north of present-day Abilene. Today the closest town is Albany. As one of a series of forts built to protect settlers from hostile Indians, Fort Griffin became famous not only as a military post, but also as the major settlement between Fort Worth and El Paso. Segments of the area's history have been told in such books as Sallie Reynolds Mathews' *Interwoven* (which concentrates on two pioneer families, the Reynolds and the Mathews) and Frances Mayhugh Holden's *Lambshead Before Interwoven,* a treatment of the well-known ranch.

Now, in *The Frontier World of Fort Griffin* additional elements of the story emerge. Utilizing all available source material, the author has developed an accurate image of Fort Griffin as one of the toughest towns in the West, ranking with Dodge City, Deadwood, and Tombstone. The fort was located on an eminence about half a mile above the river; and the town of Fort Griffin, called the Flat, lay between the two. The saloons, the houses of prostitution, and the stores to supply buffalo hunters occupied the Flat; and that's were the action was. Since buffalo hides provided the principal source of instant wealth, the town was also known as "Hide Town."

As always, wherever the money was, so also were gambling, ladies of easy virtue, outlaws, lynchings, murders, and eventually lawmen. "Doc" Holliday was attracted by the gambling; Lottie Deno came as a lady of elegance who enjoyed gambling – and no one knows what else, as she led a mysterious life; John Larn, a cattle thief and

murderer, became sheriff and served well as such until he was slain. All varieties of vice and violence were well represented in Fort Griffin at its peak of activity.

When the Indian threat subsided and the population of buffalo decreased, Fort Griffin was no longer necessary. In 1881 the fort was closed, and the adjacent town came to an end after fourteen years of riotous life. Today, only a few crumbled remains and the stone walls of a lodge building indicate the site of the once-boisterous town.

But the spirit of the glory days at Fort Griffin is not being allowed to die. The citizens of Shackelford County keep it alive with their annual Fort Griffin Fandangle, preceded by a colorful parade through the streets of Albany.

HENRY D. GARRETT, M.D.
El Paso

BALE O' COTTON: The Mechanical Art of Cotton Ginning by Karen Gerhardt Britton. College Station: Texas A&M University Press, $27.50.

This attractively-packaged volume of fact, photographs, and folklore tells us not only about cotton ginning, but also about the development and wide-reaching influence of the whole cotton industry. However, the constantly improving methods of cleaning and processing the valuable fiber play such a vital role in the success of the industry that the book's subtitle is understandable.

The author really begins at the beginning, noting that "Although there are no fossil remains, scientists who have studied the taxonomy of cotton believe that the genus was successfully creating subgenera sixty-five million years ago." She reports discoveries of bits of woven cotton fabric in archaeological excavations showing its use as fabric as early as 3000 B.C. There is also evidence that ancient people used cottonseed as feed for their livestock.

Britton then traces the development of cotton as a valuable commodity for trade through the Middle Ages and the period of colonization of the New World. She makes clear that the main form of ginning (separating the seed from the lint) during all this time was very primitive, advancing from manual pulling apart of the lint and seed to a rough form of foot-roller gin to the Indian "churka," which worked like a wringer. In mid-eighteenth-century America, "an unmodified churka gin, worked continuously by a slave, could turn out only about five pounds of clean upland cotton per day."

"Cotton's future seemed hazy at best," states the author. But then, in 1793, a young Massachusetts schoolteacher, Eli Whitney, found a cleaner and faster way of separating the lint from the seed and "without intending to . . . established cotton as the South's dominant cultural and economic force and the source of one of the nation's, and the world's, most vital industries."

From Whitney's invention of the mechanical gin to later improvements in ginning, mechanical harvesting, and modern methods of promoting and marketing cotton, Britton presents a fascinating account. What might have been a dry, technical study of the cotton industry is a warm, readable book in the hands of this author who concentrates on the human side of the story. It is sprinkled with stories related by farmers, ginners, and others who served the industry, as well as a few of their father's and grandfather's tales. Over one hundred splendid photographs further enhance the history.

The author expresses her regret that modern technology, which makes ginning quicker, easier, and less dangerous, also brings the end of a colorful chapter in American history.

Bale O' Cotton provides an interesting read for history buffs, for those who love the cotton industry, and for anyone who enjoys a story of the human spirit rising to the challenge of a difficult task and overcoming obstacles through ingenuity and hard work. It's also pretty enough for the coffee table.

JOANNE D. IVEY
Writer and General Partner
James L. Ivey, Ltd., Cotton Producers

JUH: AN INCREDIBLE INDIAN by Dan L. Thrapp. El Paso: Texas Western Press, 1992, $10.00

Now and then, on rare occasions, a small bright spot comes into the life of the historian, writer, or Apacheria buff to help him along the way. Such was the case twenty years ago when the first edition of this incredible little book about an incredible Apache chieftain was published. It was then, and still is, the most factual and definitive biography of Juh. As such, it has been used as a reference work by many of our finest historians and writers of Apache lore. The book became something of a rarity after it went out of print, and we latecomers to Apacheria often saw it only as a listing in various notes and bibliographies. Fortunately that situation has been remedied with the printing of the second edition – complete with a new introductory essay by the author and an updated text.

Juh was a superb military tactician, but, unlike Geronimo, he was not a very good press agent. For one thing, Juh had a serious speech impediment that made communications difficult, especially when he was excited; and for another, he spent most of his fighting career below the border in Mexico. Some of his most notable victories there escaped press attention in the United States. And the irony is that everything Geronimo knew about military tactics he probably learned from Juh.

Dan Thrapp, as is his wont, traveled to Juh's haunts below the border, studied and photographed the terrain and analyzed the chieftain's battle tactics. He came to know Juh's battle trademarks, and in this book he shows the similarities between Juh's engagements in Mexico and those Juh is known to have led north of the border.

Thrapp considers the ultimate example of Juh's tactical genius to be the planning and execution of the Loco exodus from the San Carlos Reservation of Arizona south to the Sierra Madre. In this spectacular 1882 feat of arms, Juh led his band of warriors from Mexico to San Carlos and then herded Loco with his ragtag band of several hundred men, women, and children through a vast country teeming with United States Army detachments and crossed the border virtually unscathed. Thrapp convincingly argues that Geronimo was totally subordinate to Juh during this operation and states that "Only Juh had the military genius to plan and carry out this sensational feat."

The latest word on this subject from Thrapp is as follows: "Juh was a complex, important man in frontier history. It is hoped that a still more complete account of his life may some day appear." Well, those of you who would consider adding this fine little book to your library can be assured that it will be a tough act to follow.

PHIL NICKELL
Mesilla, New Mexico

Coming soon . . .

from **Mangan Books,** publisher of those so attractive books dealing with the history of the El Paso Southwest, a new work by Leon C. Metz: EL PASO CHRONICLES. It's Metz's twelfth book, and the jacket blurb tells us that it presents "date by date . . . the awesome events as well as minute facts that have spawned and built a major metropolis." The book will be out in October.

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