

Hillsboro's Schoolhouses on the Hill

By Garland D. Bills

A prominent feature of Hillsboro is Schoolhouse Hill, a hummock just a block off Main Street in the northwest part of the "downtown" area. Percha Creek curves around this hill to join the North Percha along



Fig. 1. Hillsboro's third schoolhouse (1914) as it is today, a private residence. The 5,000 square foot home is currently for sale, and still retains many original fixtures such as tin ceilings and the classroom chalk boards. Photo Joe Britton.

the north side of town before bending south to separate off Happy Flat. Well, usually the creek curves north, although sometimes the Middle Percha fails to get to the curve, surging over its banks and sending flood waters cascading down Main Street, most recently in 1972.

Schoolhouse Hill is now topped by a dignified residence that once served for many years as Hillsboro's public school, giving the hill its name. The history of the school building on Schoolhouse Hill is not well understood. For example, most readers will be surprised to learn that there were three different incarnations of the school building. This report attempts to shed light on some of this history. But mysteries remain.

The Original Schoolhouse

An initial mystery is when the first school appeared on that hill. Bill Shaw, in his 1995 unfinished history of our area (p. 49), cites a glowing article about the nascent Hillsboro in the Las Cruces newspaper *Thirty Four* of 18 June 1879. The article includes the statement, "Plans have been drawn and specifications furnished for a \$1,000 school which will be built next fall or winter." On the following page, Shaw states without citing a source that "[b]y April, the anticipated new school had become a reality," suggesting that the school had opened in 1879 or 1880; the context doesn't make clear which. Confirming the 1879 opening, Shaw later (p. 78) cites the same *Thirty Four* article listing "a public school" among the business and professional establishments of Hillsboro.

(Continued on page 3 ...)

President's Message

Dear HHS Members,

Over the last few years we have accomplished great things together for the Historical Society. By your generous support, HHS has been able to acquire two important historic properties—one being the Courthouse/Jail property that was the founding inspiration of this organization. In fact, that was the very reason HHS was formed. The other acquisition was the Black Range Museum, truly a fine historic building that has been renovated to full museum status. These monumental achievements are a testament to the enthusiastic support of our community and its desire to preserve its history for future generations.

I have been privileged to be your President for two consecutive terms and am proud of our achievements. I am also honored to have led an extraordinary Board of Directors who I must say have been a pleasure to work with as partners of a competent and diligent team.

It has been my pleasure to see how HHS has grown into such a viable and successful organization. I have witnessed the development of HHS from a small group of dedicated folks who cherished the unique history of our town and region enough to donate their time and money to preserve our past. I have seen HHS grow into a well-respected private organization that contributes mightily to the preservation, education, and promotion of our history. We are an award-winning society and our museum is now a destination for travelers and local visitors.

We have come a long way in just a short time. We have survived setbacks from a pandemic and were able to adapt to the challenges of operating in the midst of it in order to provide the opportunity for the public to safely enjoy the wonderful exhibits in the Black Range Museum by implementing safety protocols that protect our visitors, staff and docents.

I have high regard for the dedication and commitments of our staff and volunteers who unselfishly give of their time and skills for the benefit of the museum, and greatly appreciate

their efforts to ensure that our museum remains open during these challenging times.

I have decided that it is time for me to step down as your President and allow someone else the opportunity to take the lead of the Society. Since this is the last President's Message that I will write for this newsletter, I want to take the opportunity to express my appreciation to the Membership, the Board of Directors, Staff and Volunteers for supporting our mission. Thanks to all for making my time as your President a truly satisfying and rewarding time in my life!

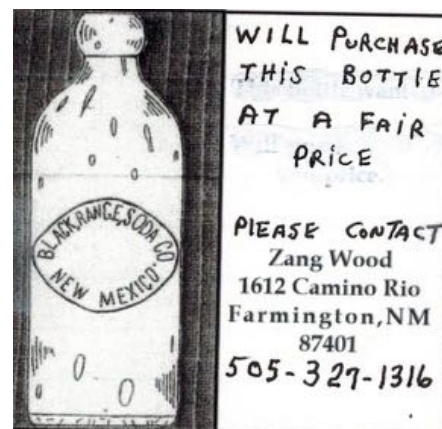
Sincerely,
Steve Dobrott

MUSEUM OPENINGS

**The Black Range Museum, Hillsboro is open
10 am – 3 pm Friday and Saturday,
and 12 noon – 3 pm on Sunday.
Come see the expanded Gift Shop!
*(For the safety of all, masks are required
inside the museum.)***

**The Kingston Schoolhouse Museum is
currently open by appointment only:
please call 575-895-5501 or email
egbdc4@gmail.com. We have an awesome
museum which contains early Kingston
artifacts, many of which you will not see
anywhere else. Hope to see you soon!**

**We invite you to visit the new HHS website!
www.hillsborohistoricalsociety.com**



(... continued from page 1)

But where was that school located? Shaw doesn't say. Nor does F. Stanley's little history that claims (p. 4) without further elucidation, "By 1882 the town had a good school." A bit of clarification is provided by the *Las Cruces Rio Grande Republican* in an October 1883 report of a "very pretty little school-house perched on the top of a high hill that overlooks the town" (cited in the HHS book *Around Hillsboro*, p. 71). In like fashion, Andrews' short history of the mission that became the Union Church notes (p. 28) that a Bishop Dunlap "in 1883 baptized L. W. Crews in the schoolhouse-on-the-hill." It may also be relevant to note that the plat of Hillsboro filed for record by probate clerk J. M. Webster on 14 December 1887 shows the property labeled "School House Hill" on the north edge of Blocks 32 and 31.

Records for this property appear only after Sierra County's creation in 1884. Promptly in 1885 four prominent early families (George and Mary Fuller, George and Adelaida Perrault, Nicholas and Harriet Galles, and Otto and Louise Gentz) sold this hilltop land to Sierra County probate judge John Donahoe (Quit Claim Deed A-161), who then transferred it to Hillsboro's School District (Warranty Deed A-766). But did the property already contain a schoolhouse, perhaps built by the citizens? We don't know.

We may assume, then, that the original Schoolhouse Hill building appeared at least in the 1880s, not long after the fabled founding of the town in 1877. And attendance was high in this early building. The 13 October 1893 issue of the *Sierra County Advocate* (henceforth *SCA* or *Advocate*) informs us not only that a third teacher had to be hired but also that her class of 36 pupils had to be held in a separate, private building, Duran's Hall.

The Black Range Museum collection has two undated overview photos of Hillsboro that capture this original schoolhouse—both probably taken by George T. Miller. The first looks north along Third Street (Fig. 2). It shows the schoolhouse on the hill and below it the slag hall and Catholic church (a cropped version was included in my newsletter essay on slag buildings, *Guajolotes, Zopilotes y Paisanos* 13.4, November 2020).

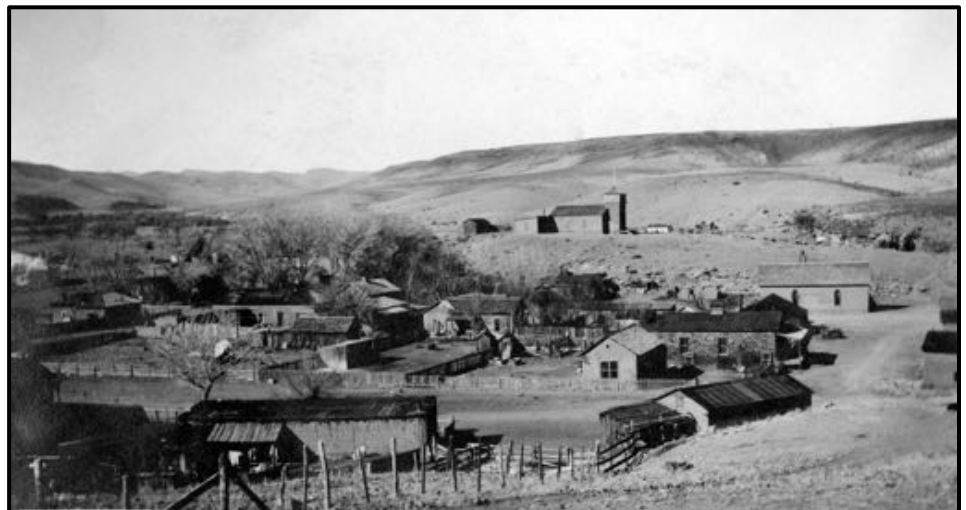


Fig. 2. The original schoolhouse on the hill, looking north along Third Street. Photo likely by George T. Miller, courtesy of the Black Range Museum.

The second photo (Fig. 3), clearly attributable to Miller, was taken from a more southeasterly direction, from the front yard of his home on Elenora Street. Markedly distinct from later schoolhouse pictures, these two photos show a bell tower and entrance on the east side of the building. We may assume that both photos are post-1893, that is, after Miller's arrival in Hillsboro.

Notice, however, that while the first photo shows an open porch at the east entrance, the second shows a covered porch. We have no information as to which photo is the earlier. However, the Sanborn-



Fig. 3. The schoolhouse seen from Elenora Street. Photo George T. Miller, courtesy of the Black Range Museum.

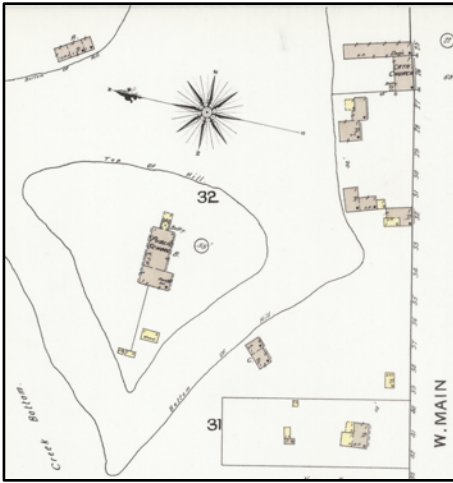


Fig. 4. Sanborn-Perris insurance map, 1893/98, detail of schoolhouse hill. Courtesy of Black Range Museum.

Perris insurance maps of both 1893 and 1898 both clearly show that the otherwise entirely adobe building had a frame entry porch with a shingle roof (Fig. 4). It may well be that the first photo was taken after 1898 when the original building was deteriorating.

We also have two undated photos of student groups that I believe to have been taken at this original schoolhouse (Figs. 5 and 6). The students are pictured against what appears to be the adobe wall between the two windows on the south side of the building. Photos of the later schoolhouses do not show windows at this height and this distance apart. Note, however, that neither of the previous photos (2 and 3) show these shutters on the windows. Such are the obscurities that plague the attempt to uncover the early history of Hillsboro.



Figs. 5 and 6: Class portraits. Photos Black Range Museum.

The Second Schoolhouse

When putting together my newsletter post on Hillsboro's slag buildings, I stumbled across an article in the 8 October 1909 *Advocate* reporting that the three classes of students were to be taught in different buildings – the church, the Cooper building, and the slag hall. That seemed odd. Why not in the existing schoolhouse? Renewed digging was required to answer this question.

Turns out this thirty-year-old schoolhouse was not only over-crowded but also deteriorating, with damages and urgent repairs reported before 1901. By 1905 the enrollment numbered 160 and "the school house [was] taxed to its limit" (*SCA* 11/3/1905). At the end of the 1908-09 school year a public meeting was held in the courthouse to talk about building a new schoolhouse. The *Advocate*, never known to keep news and opinion distinct, complains that the citizens "have been paying a special tax for school purposes" for three years raising some \$3,000, and opines that "The present building ... is in a deplorable condition and is considered unsafe" (*SCA* 6/4/1909). By the end of the month the school board advertised for bids to build the new school (*SCA* 6/25/1909). So that's why the classes that fall were held elsewhere.

The following January the school directors decided to tear down the old schoolhouse, taking care to remove and save the lumber and adobes (*SCA* 1/14/1910). By May of 1910 the school board seems to have realized that the tax-raised \$3,000 was inadequate, and a call for school bond bids was issued. And then in July a new call for construction bids was likewise issued.

The situation then gets very interesting and often confusing. Disagreements among the school board led one member to resign. The board had apparently accepted a \$7,000 bid by W. E. Mosley of Las

Cruces, but then refused to accept the bonds he offered. And while the board was in the process of selecting another builder, Mosley had already begun demolishing the old building (*SCA* 8/5/1910 and 8/12/1910). As a result of the conflict, Mosley sued. I don't know the result of the suit, but we'll later see that Mosley surfaces again in work on the schoolhouse.

In the meantime, the *Advocate* tells us the result of a special meeting of the school board on 3 August 1910: "Voted to employ A. G. Johnston, of the firm of Johnston Brothers, architects, of Alma, Neb.," to build the new schoolhouse. What!? You may ask: Why in the world would the Hillsboro school directors hire an out-of-state firm, especially one from Nebraska? Well, the answer is quite simple. Just a year earlier, according to Patricia Sze (p. 165), the Territorial Superintendent of Public Instruction had commissioned this same Johnston firm to produce the *Plans and Specifications for Small School Buildings*. This detailed, 108-page document was published by the Department of Education in Santa Fe in 1909 (it is available at <https://archive.org/details/plansspecificati00john>).



Fig. 7. The second schoolhouse, completed in 1911. Photo Black Range Museum.

One of the Johnstons arrived a little later in August and work began in earnest on a new school. Construction was carried out so rapidly that the totally new schoolhouse opened for classes just five months later, in January 1911. The stolid and commanding new building, adhering closely to the Johnston designs for small school buildings, is pictured in Fig. 7. The squarish structure, designed with ample lighting in classrooms from windows on the east and west sides, now has its entrance on the south, set off by three arches. The fortress-like adobe building appears indestructible. But appearances are deceiving.

The Third Schoolhouse

Barely three years later, on Wednesday, 28 January 1914, this second schoolhouse was destroyed by fire. The year 1914 turned out to be a doubly unfortunate one for Hillsboro. Just six months after the schoolhouse burned to the ground, Percha Creek flooded the town causing major property damage and killing Sierra County's first sheriff, Thomas Murphy.

Late January must have been exceptionally cold that year. The *Sierra County Advocate* of Friday, 30 January, tells the story (p. 3):

Hillsboro was visited by the most disastrous fire last Wednesday night since the burning of the Union Hotel and other buildings several years ago [actually ten years earlier, in 1904]. Just before 1 o'clock last Monday afternoon, Miss Eva Upchurch, who was teaching in the west room, discovered the floor on fire just at the edge of the stove; the alarm was given and the fire extinguished; the stove was examined and found to be in good condition. Just before 8 o'clock last Wednesday night there was an alarm of fire. The school house was on fire. The fire was found where the stove stood in the north room occupied by Principal August Mayer. By the time the first arrivals got there the fire had gained good headway, and all the efforts of the fire fighters were inadequate to subdue the flames and the building was soon doomed, and the structure with all its fixtures, including the books [of] the teachers and pupils, were soon reduced to ashes. The flames were fanned by a strong northwest wind that sent embers broadcast, threatening nearby buildnigs [sic]. The school directors held a meeting yesterday and decided to close the school which had three months yet to run. The building and fixtures cost about \$9,000 and carried \$3,000 insurance. A new school building will be built as soon as possible.

Recovery actions were in fact surprisingly swift. By February 10, Miss Upchurch was engaged to finish the year privately, teaching 19 students in a home (SCA 2/6/1914 and 2/13/1914). By early March the school board received the insurance money and proceeded with plans to build the third schoolhouse-on-the-hill.

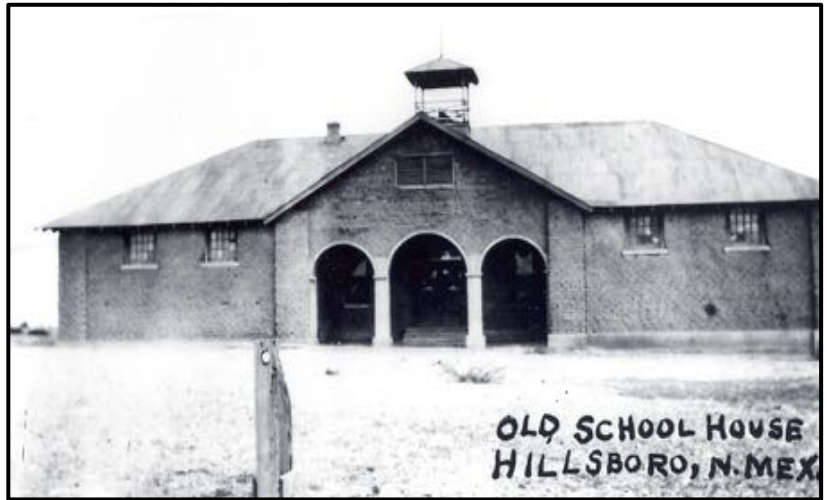
Guess who received the contract? Will Mosley, the man who had sued the school board for breach of contract in 1911. Mr. Mosley, now of El Paso, came up on June 3 to receive the lumber arriving at Lake Valley and was to start tearing down the old walls the following week (SCA 6/5/1914).

Although the devastating flood of June 10 created havoc for the town and shut down publication of the *Advocate* for two weeks, it seems not to have very significantly interrupted construction of the new schoolhouse. Rebuilding in basically the same spot proceeded rapidly. We are told that interior plastering was begun already in August (SCA 8/7/1914), and by early September all carpentry work was completed and the furniture had arrived (SCA 9/4/1914 and 9/11/1914). "The new schoolhouse was accepted by the school directors" on September 12 (SCA 9/18/1914), and classes were to begin on September 28, only nine months after the fire (SCA 9/25/1914).

One of the September 25 reports concerned the hiring of Mr. Hodge Moore of Clovis as principal. But this was a temporary appointment since by Thanksgiving Bessie Cavanaugh was reported to hold that position (SCA 11/27/1914).

One can't help but wonder what happened to principal August Mayer. It was in his office that the fire started on that terrible evening. He was a highly respected educator and administrator, having served as Sierra County's Superintendent of Schools before 1900 and having taught in Kingston and Chloride before taking charge as principal of Hillsboro's new school in 1911. Perhaps some people were unhappy about his role in the fire? Whatever the case, following that first report of the fire on 30 January his name does not appear in the *Advocate* again until the issue of 30 October carries this note: "The Chloride school has an enrollment of twenty pupils and is being taught by Prof. August Mayer." Did he resign after the fire? Or get fired? Mayer had long maintained a close connection with the Chloride area and owned a home in Fairview. In fact, he had spent the 1913 Christmas vacation before the fire in Fairview (SCA 1/9/1914). Maybe he just wanted to go home.

But back to the new school of 1914. Fig. 8 shows this third schoolhouse from the south. It is apparent that Will Mosley followed quite closely the 1911



Figs. 8 and 9. The third schoolhouse of 1914. Photos Black Range Museum.

plans of the Johnston Brothers, including the distinctive three arches of the entrance. However, the lower walls and pitched roof make it a much less imposing structure.

A more distant depiction, Fig. 10, is of special historical interest because it shows the third school from the same perspective as Fig. 3 of the original school. That is, it was shot from the Miller front yard and looks out over the historic Ferguson home (recently known as the Nancy Becker house and now as the Pearlman-Farrell place). This less-sharp photo is not the work of G. T. Miller, however—he died in 1909.



Fig. 10. The third schoolhouse seen from Miller’s front yard. Photo Black Range Museum.

This third school was well used. According to Sze (p. 166), while the Hillsboro population in 1920 was down to 829, the public school enrollment was a hefty 136. Fig. 11 captures the 1919 students bunched up on the south side for a class picture. Comparison with Figs. 5 and 6 reveals striking similarity to the students of perhaps two decades earlier.

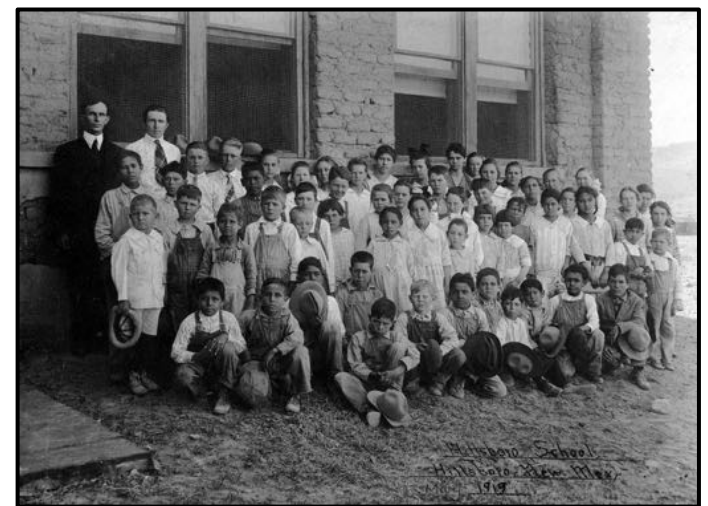


Fig. 11. Class portrait from 1919. Photo Black Range Museum.

The third schoolhouse appears to have undergone only small changes over the years. As one example, in 1920 an additional room was added specifically for high school students numbering 19 (Sze, p. 166). However, just two years later, in 1922, a new high school building – Sierra County’s first high school – opened on Elenora Street.

The schoolhouse-on-the-hill continued in use “until the 1940s” according to the *History of Sierra County* (1979, p. 53). By that point high school enrollment had declined to an unsustainable level, and the elementary students were moved to the newer building across town.

Exactly what happened next is another mystery, but it seems that the old elementary school was abandoned for a couple of decades. [According to Sue Bason, for a time after the school closed, it served as a community center where monthly dances were held with live music, much like the gatherings at the Lake Valley School. – Ed.] I have been unable to find a solid property records trail until Ross and Elsie Bell secured the property in 1971 (Warranty Deed 39-409) and used it as a café and antique shop (see below).

As I mentioned at the beginning of this essay, the schoolhouse-on-the-hill is still with us after 140 years of Hillsboro’s history. The third and final incarnation, however, has been privately owned for at least fifty years, as depicted in the photo at the beginning of this essay.



[To see inside the schoolhouse, go to a promotional video on YouTube entitled, “1 Old Schoolhouse Rd.” – Ed.]

Fig. 12. The steps leading from Our Lady of Guadalupe Church on Main Street up the hill to the schoolhouse. One wonders how many children climbed these steps on the way to class over the years! Photo Joe Britton.

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Fig. 13 The bell still standing outside of the schoolhouse. Photo Joe Britton.

Ross Bell: The Milliner, Antiques Dealer, and Restaurateur of the Old School House

By Joe Britton



One doesn't have to look long to find some colorful character lurking behind any bit of Hillsboro history. Garland Bills' piece on the schoolhouses is a case in point. After the schoolhouse was closed, one of the subsequent private owners was Ross Bell, a milliner from Amarillo who developed an antiques business in Hillsboro.

Bell bought the Old School Houses in 1971, and he and his wife Alice (Elsie?) lived in it as their home, remodeling it into its current configuration. There he opened Ross Bell Antiques, and then in 1980 started going to Las Cruces two days a week, also running a shop on Picacho Avenue.

This portrait appeared in *History of Sierra County* (Historical Society of Sierra County, 1979). Photo Black Range Museum.

Before coming to New Mexico, Bell was a hat stylist at Colbert's department store in Amarillo, a high-end establishment famous for its fur coats. Born in 1925, he was a graduate of Plainview High School, and attended Amarillo College prior to serving in World War II. He studied at the Vogue School of Fashion Art in Chicago before returning to Texas.



Sketch of a hat design by Ross Bell in the *Pampa Daily News*, 4 April 1952.

He had very particular ideas about hats. His slogan was, "A hat for every woman, one that harmonizes with the personality of the wearer." In his estimation, a woman's hat should belong to her, for "the wrong hat can spoil the most expensive dress or coat suit, and too much cannot be said about the right choice for the most becoming headgear." Among his other aphorisms was, "A woman who neglects her appearance is like an heiress who spurns her inheritance."

Bell was a frequent speaker at various social functions in the Texas Panhandle. An article in the *Pampa Daily News* from 3 April 1952, for instance (from which the above quotations are taken), announced that Bell would appear in two showings featuring local models, to be staged in the Cabot Company auditorium. The event was sponsored by the Top o' Texas chapter of the National Secretaries Association.

Upon coming to Hillsboro, not only did Bell go into the antiques business, but he converted the Old Schoolhouse into a lively restaurant. In 1983, at an estate sale on a Sunday, he decided to serve food since there was nothing else available. That led to opening a restaurant on Sundays, which eventually expanded to meals being served all week from 8 am to 7 pm. Bell acknowledged that the restaurant only broke even, but it was "a labor of love, a love of hospitality."



Ross Bell Antique Shop (former Hillsboro School)

A writer for the *El Paso Times* on 9 January 1988 described the experience of eating at the restaurant: "What struck me most upon entering was the warmth of the aged, crafted furniture, as well as the warmth of the woman who waited on me. Bell said he has five employees [the cook was formerly a cook at a Mexican monastery], friends of his who share his love of entertaining. It shows. Two spacious former classrooms are used for dining. Three other rooms display other antiques. Everything's for sale, Bell said, including whatever's in the dining rooms. Bell once posted a sign that advised, 'Please don't take your merchandise until the customers are finished.'"

Meals were served from a hearty buffet featuring such things as turkey, brisket or smothered steak for the main course, plus a salad bar. Sue Bason (who still runs Sue's Antiques in Hillsboro) was a close friend. She remembers that she was thrilled to go to Ross Bell's to eat. "It was the best food. He entertained us all for holidays like Easter and Thanksgiving."



A holiday crowd gathered at Ross Bell's. The sign reads, "Ross Bell's Old School House Antiques & Food." Photo Black Range Museum.

Sue collaborated with Ross on the sale of the belongings of "Silver City Millie," the madam of Silver City. "We thought there would be better merchandise," Sue recalls, "but there wasn't." As Max Evans tells the story, "Over the years Millie accumulated a warehouse full of objects from her whorehouses. The building was in Bayard. In 1978, just ten years after the closing of her houses on Hudson Street, Millie decided to hold a sale of these objects, with the help of Sue Bason of Sue's Antiques and Ross Bell of Old School House Antiques of Hillsboro, New Mexico. ... The results astounded everyone concerned. People came, first by the score, then by the hundreds. It took three days to finish the sale" (Max Evans, *Madame Millie*, UNM Press, 1982, p. 282).

Sue, who was the longtime organizer of the Hillsboro Apple Festival on Labor Day Weekend, also recalls that Bell always sold brisket and apple pie for the occasion from a building on Main Street. Although the stand was open only for the festival, he kept the menu posted year around, as if he couldn't wait for the next opportunity to entertain a crowd!



Ross Bell's apple pie and brisket stand for the annual Apple Festival. Photos courtesy of Sue Bason. In the picture on the right, the menu posted out front reads:

Ross Bell's
 Whole apple pies, \$6
 Apple pie piece, \$1
 Apple cobbler/ice cream, \$1.25
 Ice cream scoop, 50¢
 Drinks, 75¢
 BRISKET \$4.00

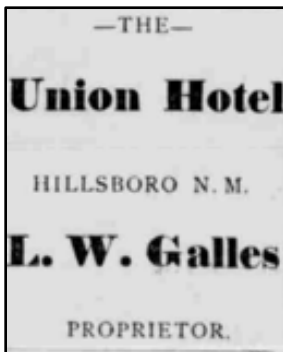
Louis William Galles: “Master” of all Trades!

By Mark Thompson

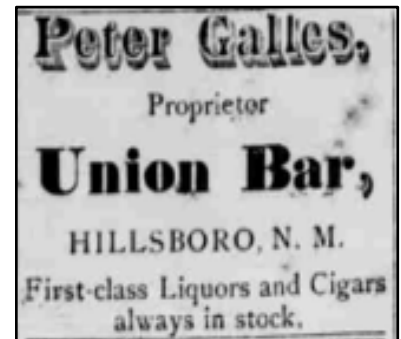
Anyone familiar with Albuquerque history, and especially the automobile business there, will recognize the important contribution made by the Galles family to the city and the business world. (And we must not overlook Taos, New Mexico where Judy [Galles] Friday and her husband also developed a car dealership!). But for historians and genealogists the obvious question is, “Who brought the Galles family to Albuquerque, New Mexico?”

Louis William Galles was born in St. Peter, Minnesota on 26 March 1866, the son of William and Anna Marie Galles who had come from Luxembourg to the United States in 1857. After a short stay in Chicago, Illinois, William and Anna moved on to New Ulm, Minnesota where William continued his work building wagons. The war of 1862 with the Dakota caused the Galles to move over to St. Peter, the home of William’s brother. The family eventually moved back to New Ulm but William died there in 1878, obviously making life a little tougher for the family he left behind.

One of Louis’ older brothers, Nicholas, had moved to New Mexico before the death of their father and was later joined by another brother, Peter, in Hillsboro. (Yet another brother, George also joined Nicholas and Peter in Hillsboro for a short period of time.) Upon the death of his father, Louis had moved into the New Ulm home of still another older brother, Joseph, and after 1881, the year his brother Nicholas married, he may have spent considerable time in New Mexico. He made a “complete” move to Hillsboro in the winter of 1885-86 and joined Nicholas and Peter in the mining business.



Louis probably did whatever his older brothers needed, but in today’s world he might be called a “mineral landman.” He may have been responsible for purchasing and selling land to obtain mineral rights and help develop the mines. The Sierra County land records contain many deeds conveying land to or from Louis. In the 1890s, when his entrepreneurial brothers moved into Arizona, Louis is mentioned in several legal documents pertaining to the mining business. In



Hillsboro Main Street in the 1890s, showing the entrance to the Union Bar on the left at the corner of Main and Broadway. Photo Black Range Museum.

1895, Louis and Peter purchased the Union Hotel at the corner of Main and Broadway in Hillsboro, which advertising shows was primarily left to Louis to operate. [A notice in the *Sierra County Advocate* of 10 May 1895 notes that, “Mr. Galles is a thorough business man and will make the Union one of the very best hotels in the Territory. He succeeds in everything he undertakes to do, and this will be no exception. Mrs. Galles, who is a fine housekeeper, will personally superintend matters throughout the house.” The *Sierra County Advocate* of 24 May 1895 adds an additional detail: Louis left his grocery business to manage the hotel, and Peter went into the retail liquor and cigar business at the hotel bar. See the ads above from 6 September 1895. -Ed] The master had begun to spread his business wings!

But what about family? On 4 February 1889, Louis married Elizabeth Gentz of Arizona, in Hillsboro. [The *Sierra County Advocate* of 9 February 1889, however, identifies “Lizzie Gentz” as being of Hillsboro, and notes the service was performed in the Union Hotel Parlor by the Rev. N. W. Chase, “witnessed by a large number of their friends and acquaintances.” The Gentz were one of the early prominent families of Hillsboro. – Ed] Their first child, Herbert Louis (H. L. “Sr.”) was born in Hillsboro on 20 June 1890. A second son, Walter, was born the next year, also in Hillsboro. (Walter unfortunately died very young, in 1913, in Albuquerque.)

In 1902, Nicholas Galles moved from Hillsboro to Las Cruces after being appointed to a federal job by President Theodore Roosevelt and perhaps Louis began to acquire other interests. Louis became associated with the Occidental Insurance Company and in 1904 moved to Albuquerque where for a time he ran the local office. (December 1904 was also when a significant fire destroyed the Union Hotel in Hillsboro.)

A Case of Mistaken Identity?

The image at right, mistakenly labeled “Louis W. Galles,” was included in a promotional history of the Galles family in the *Albuquerque Journal* on 23 May 1955* (pp. 84-85). A scan of this image made its way into the Black Range Museum photo archive, similarly labeled. However, author Mark Thompson notes that in the “Galles Family History: Past and Present” by Joan Galles Oellien (1995, found in the genealogy room of the main Albuquerque Public Library), the image is identified as William Galles, father of Louis Galles. This attribution seems to be confirmed by what the author was told by the Brown County, Minnesota Historical Society, where Galles was born. So most likely the portrait is not Louis but William Galles. It remains a bit of a mystery why there are not known photographs of Louis Galles himself.

*The *Journal* article was entitled, “The Amazing Story of a Motor Company in Continuous Growth ... and of the Family that Built It.” The caption below the picture reads: “Mr. Louis W. Galles who owned the second automobile in New Mexico, was the grandfather of the man who directs the destinies of the Galles Motor Co. of today. His principles continue to motivate the family. Those principles—especially his honesty and integrity—have been the basis on which the company has grown.”



As shown by current Galles Motor Company advertising, the involvement of the family in the automobile business began in 1908. The history of the Galles family work in that business should be written by a “car buff,” but I can say from a couple of teasers that the history is pretty fascinating. Given that his oldest child was only 18 in 1908, it seems obvious that Louis was involved in the “birth” of the family business. One short newspaper article discusses a “speed record” Louis set with a car driven from Albuquerque (probably Broadway and Central) east to Tijeras on 2 March 1908. In September 1909, Herbert, apparently on “car business” (he was referred to as a “chauffer”), was in an accident in El Paso in which two people were killed. By 1913, Herbert was sales manager at the Haynes Auto Co. in Albuquerque. (Haynes was actually the name of the vehicle made in Kokomo, Indiana.) In 1918, Hebert was selling cars at the “Cadillac Service Station.” By 1928, Herbert was running the “New Mexico Motor Corporation.” As noted, a lot of early interesting history.

I am not sure why Louis did not stay with Herbert in the automobile business, but in 1914, Louis and a partner from outside the family purchased a dry goods company operating in Northern New Mexico.

Louis and Elizabeth moved to Farmington, then still in Rio Arriba County. Two years later he transferred to the main office of the company in another town in the County and they moved again. Louis and Elizabeth moved back to Albuquerque about 1920 but I could not identify any new business affiliation.

Louis stayed active in civic affairs and, according to newspaper accounts, for the next several years he spent a great deal of his time promoting the Republican Party and its candidates. Apparently by the late 1920s his health began to fail him. He may have experienced an illness which had originally impacted his mother who had died in 1901. Louis died on 25 January 1932, and is buried in the Fairview Cemetery in Albuquerque. RIP Third Cousin, 3 times removed! (Full Disclosure: the author of this essay is the great-grandson of Nicholas Galles.)

See also Mark Thompson's essay, "Nicholas Galles, Father of Sierra County" (5 December 2011) at: <http://hillsborohistory.blogspot.com/2011/12/nicholas-galles-father-of-sierra-county.html>



The Galles burial plot in the Fairview Cemetery, Albuquerque. The date of Louis' birth is indicated as May 17, 1867, although there is good evidence from baptismal records that he was born in 1866. Photo Gary O'Dowd.

A letter from Louis Galles in the *Albuquerque Journal*, 14 June 1908, describing some of his early automotive exploits:



REO AUTOMOBILE CO.

Having used our Reo Touring Car for several months and having run it over 3,000 miles we want to tell you what we think of it, but hardly know how to express ourselves. We bought our car one Saturday morning and took two lessons from Mr. Wood and started out Sunday on a trip on which we traveled over 1,000 miles without so much as a puncture or repair of any kind.

We have never had to turn back on account of bad roads and have gone over roads where people said teams could not go. We have pulled through sand up to our rear axle and went up hills that looked impossible. We have saved over ½ our time by not having to wait for trains and slow moving livery teams. We consider the Reo the ideal car for New Mexico and would not be without one.

Yours truly, GALLES and RABBE

[The Reo Motor Car Company, based in Lansing, Michigan, produced automobiles and trucks from 1905 - 1975. It was founded by Ransom E. Olds, also the founder of Oldsmobile. - Ed.]

Editor's Note

A thread that runs through this issue's articles is the ambiguity, even inaccuracy, of many historical sources. Despite Garland Bills' in-depth research on Hillsboro's schoolhouses, for instance, "mysteries remain." Mark Thompson wonders why he can find no photos of his prominent ancestor, Louis W. Galles. On it goes.

As if to underscore the troubles facing Sierra County's historical researchers, Craig Springer (one of our advisors) wrote to point out that in his recent article, "Always Bigger in the Telling" (*Wild West Magazine*, December 2020), he makes the observation that Kingston especially "seems perpetually tagged with exaggerated numbers, be it actual residents, newspapers, grocery stores, or saloons."

As an example, Craig points to the peculiar discrepancy between an article in the *Silver City Enterprise* on 16 November 1882, claiming a population of 1,800 for Kingston (with no less than 40 saloons!), and another piece by a certain John McCafferty published contemporaneously almost to the day on 14 November 1882 in the *Albuquerque Morning Journal*, which reported only modest mining activity in Kingston, with no more than 30 miners at work. McCafferty concluded that "there is nothing in connection with the mineral deposits of Lake Valley and the Kingston region to justify any kind of emigration thereto." Moreover, Craig points to a business gazetteer from just two years later, in 1884-85, that in listing the various businesses of Kingston, puts the population at only 300!

All this is to say, that we historians are more storytellers than social scientists—which is perhaps both the fun and the challenge of trying to dig through the various contrasting and even contradictory sources we have in order to catch some glimpse, however fleeting, of what life was really like in times past.

On another note, a special thank you to Eli Jimenez, age 95, who on the opposite page shares some of his personal memories of growing up in Sierra County, and of his good friends the Crouch family. We can look forward to hearing more from Mr. Jimenez in coming editions!

—Joe Britton

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www.hillsborohistoricalsociety.com/contact/

The mission of the Hillsboro Historical Society is to preserve, collect, and protect the history of Hillsboro, Kingston, and the surrounding area.

HHS is a member of the

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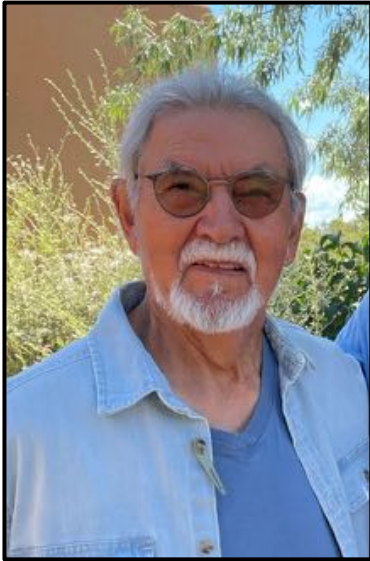
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From Animas Canyon: The Crouch Family

By Eli Jimenez

Eli Jimenez, age 95, grew up in Hot Springs, and has shared these memories of his close childhood friends, the Crouch family, through his daughter Kathleen Jimenez.



Eli Jimenez, born 28 November 1926. Photo Kathleen Jimenez.

Sammy [Crouch] was famous for his huge productive orchards in what is now the flood plain of the Rio Grande River and Caballo Dam. They grew apples, peaches, pears and prunes. They also had huge gardens where they grew corn, watermelons, cantaloupe, tomatoes, chile, potatoes and sweet potatoes. They sold [produce] at the ranch and also travelled to Palomas, Hillsboro, and Hot Springs in a Model T pickup with side-boards and side-curtains. They traveled weekly and semi-weekly during the harvest season.

My father, Antonio, was like a brother to them and they always stopped by our house and gave our family what they had not sold. This was during the Depression years so they knew there was never a surplus of food in our home.

When Caballo Dam was being built [in 1938], they had to move from the flood plain to Animas Canyon. We heard that the government had given them a paltry sum for their beautiful huge farm. They used that money to move to Animas Canyon, moving as many of the trees from the orchard as they could transport in their Model T and horse-drawn wagons. I can only feel that it must have been traumatic for the beautiful and loving family whose roots were planted in their Caballo farm. Animas Creek ran through the back of their new farm.

When they had established themselves in Animas Canyon we often visited them and were welcomed as part of the family. They built a house with porches that had a large kitchen that served as a dining room. They had a large table that could seat ten to twelve people and Sister Crouch, as we called her, enjoyed our family. They heaped food on our plates and there were two or more pitchers of milk on the table. Since they had milk cows we could drink as much milk as we wanted. We were blessed with their friendship.

Sammy Crouch was responsible for my father becoming a Christian and eventually a preacher in the Spanish Methodist Church and the Spanish Presbyterian Church, and many years later as an evangelical in the town of Hill, a small community near Dona Ana. Brother Sammy deferred to my father in interpreting the Bible verses.

Sammy and Howard always wore bib overalls and work shirts when working on the farm. Sister Crouch always wore long skirts and blouses with long sleeves and a long fancy apron. The brothers always deferred to her in matters of their home. They brought firewood to fill the large woodbox and water from the well. They helped Sister with setting up the wash tubs for doing the laundry. They used a long cross cut saw and an ax to chop firewood. We would take the back seat of our car out and the brothers filled it neatly with firewood. They and we heated the houses and did all the cooking on a wood burning stove. Our large family were the beneficiaries of the gracious family. They called my father Brother Tony, and in return we called them Brother Howard and Brother Sammy and Sister. Brother Sammy was the leader and organizer, and as a professor was the brains of the family. He organized everything—the orchards, barns, fencing. It was all neat.

Sister could never remember my name. “Now what is your name?” she would ask. “Eli, Sister.” “Elisha?” “No, Eli.” “Elijah?” “No, Sister. Eli!” Endless, endless, but she loved me even without knowing my real name.



Hillsboro Historical Society
Serving the Community since 2008

2022 ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

The Hillsboro Historical Society is an all-volunteer 501(c)3 non-profit organization whose mission is to preserve, collect, and protect the history of the Hillsboro, Kingston, and Lake Valley region. Memberships are on a calendar year basis (January 1 to December 31) and include a subscription to our quarterly newsletter (sent via email unless requested otherwise). Dues are \$25 annually. All contributions are tax-deductible.

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