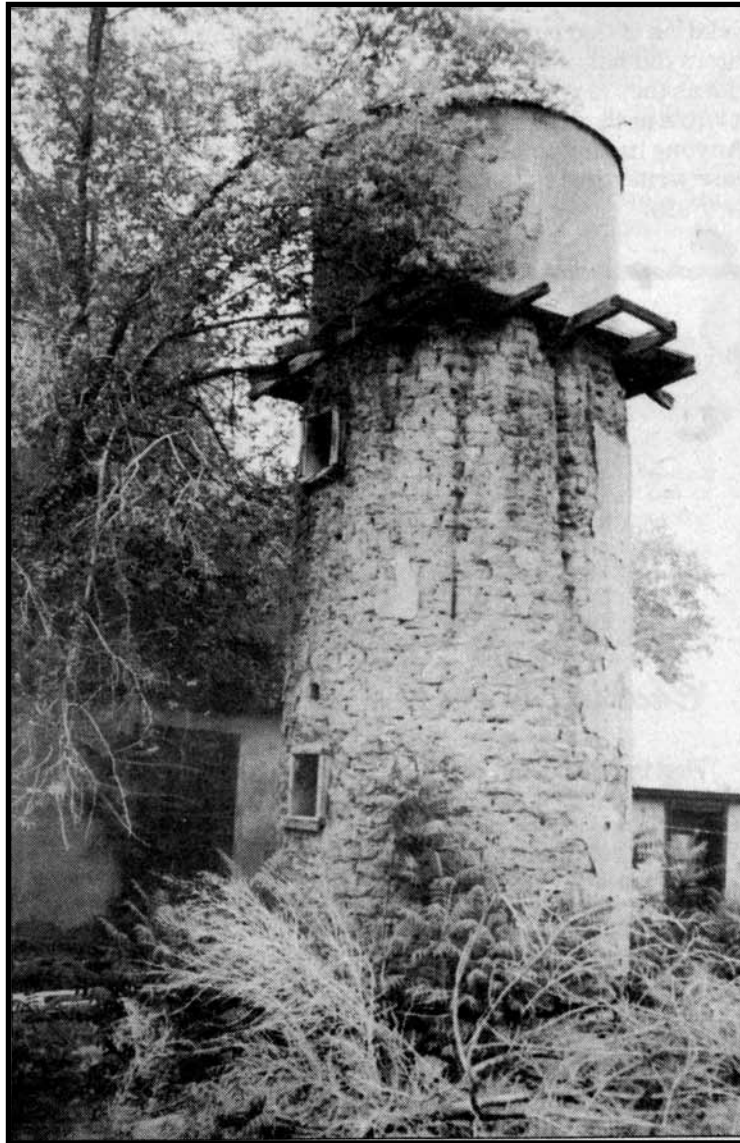


  
**Guajolotes, Zopilotes y Paisanos**

**Vol. 11 No. 3**

**Hillsboro Historical Society**

**August 2018**



**IT'S BEEN A BUSY SUMMER**

## President's Message



Larry Cosper resigned from the Hillsboro Historical Society (HHS) Board, and his office of President, prior to the monthly meeting in August. I walked up to the meeting at the Community Center, wondering what the duties of the President of the HHS were. I left realizing that I had been chosen to complete the rest of Larry's annual term, and I *really* needed to find out what the President does. With such angst aside, this is my "Letter" – one of the President's duties - for Volume 11, Number 3.

First, I want to recognize Larry's accomplishments as President. He was instrumental in the acquisition of the Black Range Museum and the Sierra County Courthouse site for HHS. I am not sure that either of those would have happened absent his participation. He leaves me with a "hard act to follow".

We now find ourselves with wonderful opportunities and significant challenges. Two years ago we had some money, no property, with dreams of acquiring property. We now own the two properties we had longed for, and we're having to look hard at ourselves to assure that we can meet the wishes of our members and donors.

Garland Bills is leading the effort to protect the Museum by replacing the roof. Prior to that, he and Barbara Lovell spent long hours cataloging the artifacts that came with the museum. Nichole Trushell and Steve Morgan have developed a site plan for the museum property, and Nichole spearheaded our event at the Museum in June. The rest of us have been engaged in those activities and in the administration of the organization. And all of this is only the beginning.

Both properties need work, and that I believe is an understatement. Having two properties with a variety of ongoing financial demands means that we must quickly prioritize our efforts. We, of course, will be seeking money from whomever will donate. Asking for money is not one of my strengths, but I am working on a system which will allow donors to specify how they wish their donations to be used. Now that we have met our primary goals, assuring that donations are used as our donors wish is an imperative to assure that our members and our communities benefit from our efforts.

With that I wish you all the best.

Robert Barnes  
President, HHS

*Guajolotes, Zopilotes y Paisanos* is the quarterly newsletter of the:  
**Hillsboro Historical Society**  
P. O. Box 461  
Hillsboro, New Mexico, 88042

The mission of Hillsboro Historical Society's is to preserve, collect, and protect the history of Hillsboro, Kingston and the surrounding area. We are an all-volunteer, non-profit organization. All donations are tax deductible.

### **Board of Directors**

President: Robert Barnes  
Vice President: Barbara Lovell  
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Secretary: Sandy Ficklin  
Other members: Nichole Trushell, Garland Bills, Steve Dobrott, Harley Shaw

**Advisors:** Karl Laumbach, Chris Adams, Craig Springer, R. D. Brinkley, Patricia Woodruff, Penny McCauley, Mark Thompson, John Tittmann, Lynn Mullins, Don Avery, Margie Gibson, Sonja Franklin, Robin Tuttle.

**Newsletter Editor:** Harley Shaw

The title for this newsletter is inspired by the association of Hillsboro and Kingston with Percha Creek. The name Percha may derive from the fact that turkeys (*guajolotes*) "perch" or roost along it. Perhaps there were more historically than there are now. Of course, Hillsboro and Kingston both have their own seasonal vulture (*zopilote*) roosts, so the term remains appropriate. Paisanos are countrymen or friends, a term that applies to us humans who also "roost" here. In our small towns, we are extremely diverse in roots, religion, and politics, yet we remain countrymen. In keeping with the avian title motif, in the Southwest, roadrunners, which also live within the Percha Creek watershed, are called *paisanos*.

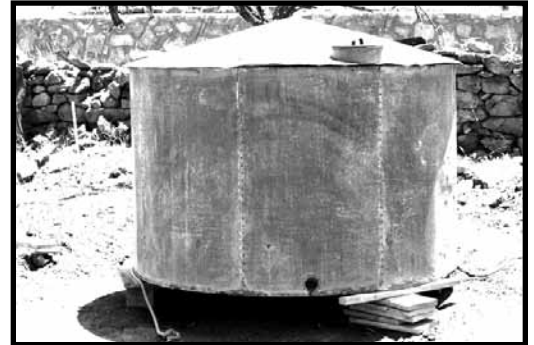
# Hillsboro Historical Society News

## The HHS Soars



HHS has had a busy summer, and things don't seem to be slowing down for the fall. Local contractors Bruce Cospier and Rand Berger have taken on the various construction projects associated with the Black Range Museum. We gave top priority to repair and stabilization of the water tower behind the museum. Bruce and son, Asa, completed this project, and the tower should stand for several more generations.

Member contributions enabled us to put a heat-protective roof over the storage container. Following the landscaping design plans of Steve Morgan and Nichole Trushell, that roof was extended to provide a twelve-foot porch, along with a board and batten front on the storage container that will become a "history village" area.



We want to thank Dennis Franklin for use of his backhoe, and Dave Manzara for moving the old outhouse. Jon Miller loaned us his lift to remove and replace the water tank from the tower during restoration. John also hauled several loads of crusher fine to bring the grade up to the bottom of the leveled storage container.

He brought the equipment needed to level the materials. Several board members and residents helped cleanup the back yard. A detailed list of acknowledgements will have to wait until the next issue.

The new facade and backyard plans were highlighted in the "Stroll Through History" on June 16. The event was attended by over 50 town members and visitors. Board members and volunteers provided learning stations on ranching, mining, ethnobotany and the refurbished water tower. These active learning stations gave first glimpses into educational opportunities in the museum's future! Squeezing the event in between two construction jobs was an amazing accomplishment. Thanks to Nichole Trushell for organizing the event and to all the members who helped make it happen. Neighbor Sue Bason allowed us to spill over onto the porch of her store and use tables and sitting space.



Reroofing the Black Range Museum is underway starting with the eastern six





rooms. This project requires rebuilding a sagging wall on the south side and providing bond beam on all walls to support the new roof. It also requires removing all ceilings in this part of the museum and hauling out the old dirt insulation from the original 1880s construction. One dangerous doorway will be sealed, and two others opened to facilitate flow of visitors and provide safety exits. The museum project is coordinated by a Building

Committee made up of Garland Bills, Steve Dobrott, and Steve Morgan. The Museum will be closed during August, September, and October in order to complete construction.

Concurrent with the roofing project, we must accomplish several other projects. The electrical system is ancient—a single switch controls the lights in seven rooms; climate controls are non-existent. Volunteers working in the museum freeze in winter and bake in summer. While the attic space is exposed we must update wiring through the entire building and provide a heating-cooling system before the museum reopens. Landscaping is on hold until the building repairs are finished.





As reported in May, we have purchased the Sierra County courthouse and jail. We have a lot of clean up to do and plan to provide interpretive signs and pathways for people interested in local history and natural history. Several HHS members held an informal brain-storming session at the site, and we hope to continue such informal gatherings, with more townspeople present and providing ideas.

At least four of our members attended the New Mexico Historical Society Convention in Alamogordo last spring. Steve Dobrott, participated in a panel discussing the history of New Mexico wolves. Other members of the panel were Julie Seton, granddaughter of Ernest Thompson Seton and Ken Kawata, retired director of the New York Zoological Society. A highlight was Steve's showing of a video about handling penned wolves on the Ladder Ranch, wherein Steve figured as a near-victim. We need to work in a showing of Steve's heroics into a program here in Hillsboro.

Layout and design of the collection of articles from the first 10 years of *Guajolotes, Zopilotes, y Paisanos* is complete. We plan to publish this through a print on demand press and sell it through the museum and local retailers. In the meantime, Garland has wrapped up the rewrite of the Sadie Orchard biography and is working on an index. It is next in line for layout.

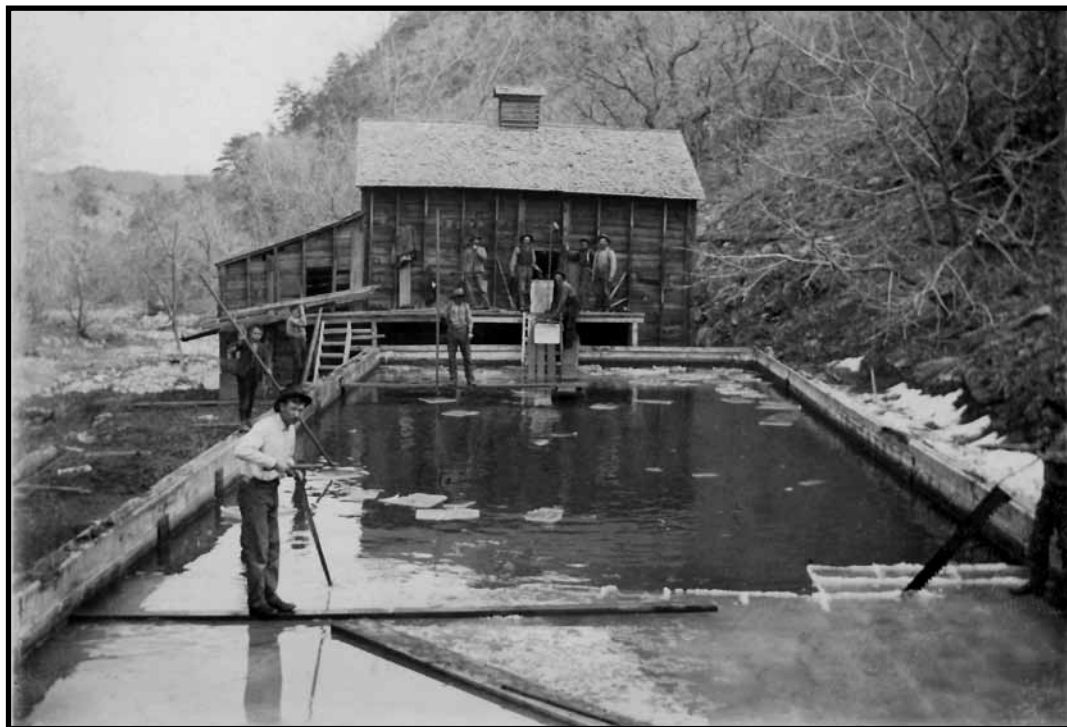
Mark Thompson and Harley Shaw continue their informal research into the little-known historic trail that crossed the Black Range near the head of Berrenda Creek. This was mentioned in a recent copy of this newsletter as the place that Kearny and Emory crossed the mountain. The more we snoop, the more we are convinced that this pass was used by early tribes well before the Spanish Entrada. Karl Laumbach has recently joined our quest for information. George Ruhlen suggested the name "Parks Pass" in his 1956 article about Kearny's route. Thompson, Shaw, and Laumbach hope to suggest a more historically appropriate name. So far, the best idea is *Mimbrenño* Pass.





## Selling Your Cold

by Bob Barnes



Our cumulative knowledge is much greater than that possessed by any individual. In my own hubris I sometimes forget to focus on that as much as I should. In a previous issue of this newsletter I wrote about an icebox and where the ice came from to make it work. In this article I followup on the location of the ice house.

Hillsboro is fortunate to have one of the premier “repeat photographers” of the southwest in Harley Shaw. So I enlisted his assistance in seeking a good repeat of the photograph of the ice house (above). We wandered up the middle Percha and stopped at the spot of my previous effort. Harley concurred that it was probably not the right location and thought that it might be further upstream.

Heading upstream we ran into Alan Currier busy at work on his property at the second crossing of Percha Creek above Kingston. We asked if he knew where the location of the old ice house might be? “Yes” he said, “it is down

there”, pointing to a section of the Middle Percha below his vegetable garden. “In fact, it was shown as an improvement on the plat for the original patent of this property.” He went off to get a copy of the plat and we wandered down to the stream.

When he returned with the plat, he also showed us a witness tree used for the description of the property. A number had been carved into a blaze of an old tree. Part of the local history is now obscured by the tree trying to heal itself. Only the numbers “326” are still visible on the blaze (photo next page).

This encounter led to an extended discussion of ice houses (the kind used to store ice) and Alan’s recollection of seeing a photograph of one where he had grown up in the northeastern U.S. that had burned, leaving only a massive mound of ice. A perfect example of the effectiveness of the sawdust insulation. He also recalled his father talking about having to saw ice from a pond, how that was “hard work”, and how ice



**Witness tree markings at site of Kingston ice plant on Percha Creek**

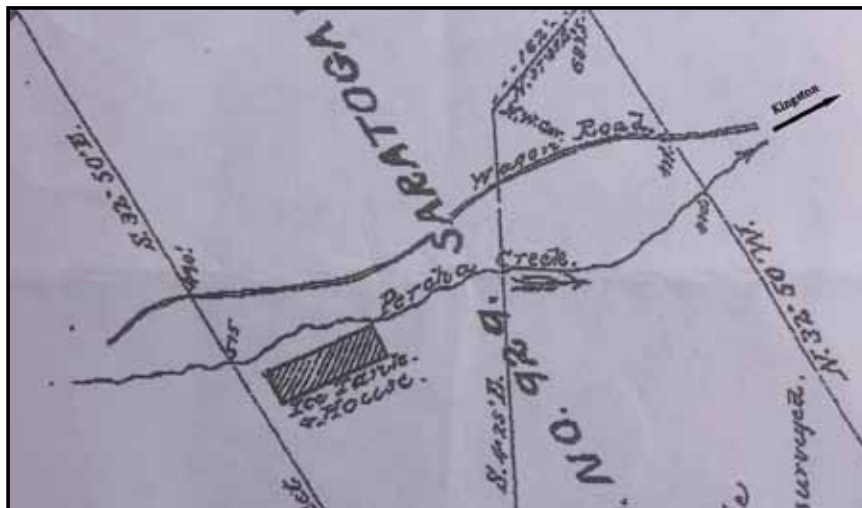
had not only been sold but used on the farm to refrigerate milk and other dairy products.

I had found the Ice Tank House photo interesting when I first saw it. But Alan looked at it with a practiced eye, and one of great interest. He had never seen a photograph of the ice house that had existed on his property. He noted that one of the men on the left was holding an ice saw, for instance.

Later, I was able to enlarge the image and noted several things which had escaped my original assessment: Both of the men in the

foreground are holding saws; one of the boys on the left of the tank is holding a pole which was used to push the ice blocks to the far end of the tank (several cut pieces are visible in the tank); the man at the center of the photograph is lifting a piece of ice out of the tank; and there is a stack of ice in the middle of the photograph. All other things considered, this is a very well constructed photograph. It shows all of the stages of harvesting the ice as well as the facility.

Thanks to Harley Shaw and Alan Currier for providing the information used in this article.



**Section of early plat of Alan Currier's property near second crossing of Percha above Kingston**

## Mystery Tongs

Bob Barnes



In “Selling Your Cold” I included a detail of the “ice house photo” which showed tongs being used to lift cut blocks of ice from the ice pond. That activity raised the question about the tools used for heavy lifting in general and a set of tongs which is in the collection of the Black Range Museum specifically.

Steve Dobrott indicated that they came from a barn in Hermosa and thought they may have been used to lift hay bales into the loft. Because I had been writing about ice, ice blocks, etc., someone else asked if they might have been used to lift the 300 pound blocks of ice which were manufactured by ice houses.

When I went to the Museum to photograph the tongs, I met Fred Reade, whose great-grandfather came to the Deming area with the California Column during the civil war. Fred, a native of Deming, is shown (photo to left) holding the tongs in question. Fred remembered the ice plant in Deming, which was located in the building now on the west side of US-180 just north of the I-10 underpass. He posited that the tongs could have been used to hoist 300 pound ice blocks like those made at the Deming plant.

And this is the deal. All of the above is possible. Given Steve’s ability to provide a bit of background on this item, and a bit of online

research, we can conclude that in this case it is probable that they were used to lift hay bales, but tongs like these were used to lift all sorts of heavy loads: ice, hay bales, logs, rocks, and \_\_\_\_\_ (fill in the blank with anything heavy and awkward that needed to be lifted). Tongs like these were part of the working west, where a tool was best if it could be used for a lot of things. What our western ancestors would have given for a big roll of duct tape!

**HILLSBORO HISTORICAL SOCIETY MEETS ON THE SECOND TUESDAY OF EACH MONTH. SUMMER MEETING TIME IS 6 PM. WE ENCOURAGE SOCIETY MEMBERS AND ANYONE INTERESTED IN OUR LOCAL HISTORY TO ATTEND.**



## The Kingston Opera House



The Kingston what? If you thought that Kingston was just a mining town with lots of miners and a few cowboys you may wonder what need it had for an Opera House. But most towns of the early west had an Opera House. Rethink the definition, think community center instead. A place where people could meet, local music and plays could be performed, and traveling shows could be staged. An Opera House brought respectability and served a useful function.

And Kingston had one (see the photo and photo detail below). The Kingston School House Museum is busy building its collection, most recently with a significant contribution by the Whitham family. The Whitham's lived in Kingston from the late 1880's to the mid-1890's and were part owners, and operators of, the Hillsboro - Kingston Toll Road.

J. D. Whitham kept a personal journal for his entire life and it is proving to be the source of much information about the day-to-day workings of Kingston during the later part of the 1800's. But it has a lot of gaps. (Those interested in the weather of the period will find it very useful). For instance, he does not mention the reading of "The Bed Rock Pitches, or the

Dying Miner" as part of the February 20, 1892 "programme" at the Kingston Opera House. But, in an entry dated January 11, 1890 he notes "Acted 'Brabantio' for the Guild in Othello."

The people of the old west did not work all the time; they sought all forms of entertainment. Drinking, gambling, and whoring entertained a lot of people and provided the livelihood for many more. But other forms of entertainment were also prevalent; readings, town hall meetings, music, dances, plays (local and traveling) were all part of the daily life of Kingston and the rest of the old west.

In some ways, not much has changed in the 126 years since Whitham did his reading. We still write and put on plays, we still have jam sessions across from the post office, we still attend home grown and traveling music shows. We still entertain ourselves.

Thanks to Barb Lovell, the curator of the Kingston School House museum, for making this material available.



## Cooke's Spring and Fort Cummings Tour

**On October 6, 2018, HHS will sponsor  
a tour of Cooke's Spring and Ft. Cummings.**

**Bob Barnes, who leads the tour, notes:**

Cooke's Spring and Ft. Cummings are two of the most historic sites in the American Southwest, and they are less than a quarter of a mile apart. These historic sites are on the southwestern edge of the Cooke's Range. Cooke's Spring was a dependable source of water in the area. Cattle herds, stagecoach lines, and people "heading west" all stopped at Cooke's Spring. It was because of this that Ft. Cummings was built.

**What you will see:** Frankly, you will not see much. The walls of Ft. Cummings have mostly melted into the desert, and the spring was capped in the late 1800's. But if you want a story, a historical story, a story of personal drama, tragedy, and perseverance, this is the place. There are few places in the west where a better story can be told. I will be leading the tour and will try my best to tell that story. Against the backdrop of where it happened, looking beyond the desert scrub of today, we will talk about what this place was and what it meant in the last half of the 1800's.

If you are interested, please visit the Ft. Cummings and Cooke's Spring page on <http://blackrange3.org/the-human-history-of-the/towns-of-the-black-range/ft-cummings-and-cookes/>. We are fortunate to have an excellent resource for this area in *Cooke's Peak - Pasaron Por Aqui - A Focus on United States History in Southwestern New Mexico*, by Donald Howard Couchman, 1990 . You may also wish to read "Annals of Old Fort Cummings" by William Thornton Parker, M.D., which was published in 1916. All of these may be downloaded at the page mentioned above.

**Logistics:** The tour will be by private car pool and will depart from the Black Range Museum in Hillsboro at 9:00 a.m. with a stop at 9:30 in Nutt to pick up any-

one who would rather meet there. Car pooling arrangements will be made once registration is complete. Please note that high clearance is recommended on the access road, and there is a possibility that vegetation will mark the side of your vehicle (desert pinstriping). A light lunch and cold water will be furnished at the site. There are no facilities at this area, although there are some tall bushes. Privacy should be easy but conditions are "primitive". Even in October, wear sun protection--there is no shade to speak of. And we will be in the desert. There may be snakes, spiders, chupacabras, etc., about (although I have never seen any on my many trips to the area).

The charge per HHS member is \$25 and a \$50 charge per non-member (which includes a \$25 membership for the upcoming year). All services provided during this tour are volunteer, so all of the tour fee goes directly to the HHS general operating fund.

Having told you the possible "down sides", I would like to reiterate that Ft. Cummings and Cooke's Spring are two of the most historic sites in this area. In my mind they are magical - and hopefully I can impart that feeling of magic to the tour participants.

**To register:** E-mail Garland Bills at [gbills@unm.edu](mailto:gbills@unm.edu) and tell him to reserve space(s) for you. Then send a check made out to the Hillsboro Historical Society at "Hillsboro Historical Society, P. O. Box 461, Hillsboro NM 88042". Be sure to indicate that the check is for the Ft. Cummings Tour, on the check.

We are always looking for additional tour ideas and special event concepts for our members. If you know of something you would really like to do, please let us know, and we will see if we can figure out how to do it.

## Chester Carrara

August 23, 1933 - July 11, 2018



Hillsboro lost a large repository of knowledge of prospecting, hardrock mining, mining history, and local minerals with the passing of Chester Carrara. As a youth, Chet moved a lot with his father, “Sarge” Carrara, who was a career military man. But Sarge spent his furloughs prospecting and mining around Hillsboro, so Chet came to view Sierra County as his real home. After a stint in the air force, he settled in Hillsboro in time to barely escape a collapsing house during the 1972 flood by climbing into the branches of a nearby tree. He worked in mines in the area, as well as other parts of the state. In later years, he tended to several of the old mine sites northeast of town and always welcomed company

when bouncing his Chevy 4-WD over the rough road up to the Snake or Bountiful mine sites. He loved to share his knowledge of the minerals of the area, and could keep a guest entranced with his stories. He maintained a fascinating collection of minerals and mining artifacts from our region.

For all of his knowledge and willingness to share, what most of us will remember about Chet is his easy grin and greeting if you met him at the postoffice, or his shrill “hee-hee-hee” at the General Store Cafe, punctuating one of his favorite tales just shared with a visitor. And none of us will forget the care and companionship he provided to his neighbor, Maria Lamb Fellin, who passed away last year. For those of us who will always be “newcomers” Chet and Maria made us aware, early on, that we had moved to a very special place, where people helped each other. We are fortunate to have a long interview of Sarge Carrera in our HHS files and hope to tap those, along with memories of some who knew Chester well to assemble a more detailed biography for one of our future issues.





**NOTICE: THE BLACK RANGE MUSEUM IS CURRENTLY CLOSED FOR ROOFING AND REPAIRS. WE EXPECT IT TO BE OPEN AGAIN BY NOVEMBER.**

**JOIN HILLSBORO HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

**MEMBERSHIPS ARE ON A JANUARY 1 TO DECEMBER 31 BASIS.**

The Hillsboro Historical Society is a 501(c)3 organization that preserves and shares the history and artifacts of the Hillsboro, Kingston and Lake Valley. Member benefits include the quarterly newsletter, priority registration for lectures, programs and field trips. Dues are \$25 annually for individual or family. Please mail this completed Membership Form, along with your check made payable to Hillsboro Historical Society, P. O. Box 461, Hillsboro NM 88042.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: ( \_\_\_\_\_ ) \_\_\_\_\_

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Enclosed is \$ \_\_\_\_ (from Feb to Feb) individual or family membership

Additional Donation \$ \_\_\_\_\_

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Newsletter sent (check one): \_\_\_\_\_ Digital by email \_\_\_\_\_ Hard copy mailed

We prefer to send the newsletter via email. If we have no email address for members, we will mail them a hard copy.